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- TIPTOE THROUGH THE BLUEBELLS

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WITH OUR
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CL PAINT
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A CLASSIC
AIRSTREAM
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Contents



44



76



15



58

May 2015 issue 353

Houses & gardens

- 15 **EMPORIUM** New ideas to introduce fresh country style to your home
- 22 **INTO THE WILD BLUE YONDER** Pack up a picnic and spend a day among nature in a woodland filled with bluebells
- 44 **SHADES OF NATURE** Create a fresh springtime look with the brand-new Country Living Paint Collection
- 76 **AWAY FROM IT ALL** From a romantic gypsy wagon to a jaunty 1950s caravan, these rustic retreats on wheels provide characterful spaces far from the madding crowd
- 103 **GARDEN NOTES** Everything you need to know to get the most from your plot
- 106 **SECRETS OF A GLORIOUS GARDEN** We follow the growing year in the stunning garden at Loseley Park in Surrey, with practical ideas for you to use
- 114 **SEASIDE SIMPLICITY** An intriguing Dorset property has been transformed into a stylish house and business, where vintage

furniture and coastal ephemera make every guest feel immediately at home

- 122 **BOWOOD IN BLOOM** Dazzling displays of bright and beautiful rhododendrons await visitors to the glades of Wiltshire's Bowood House
- 128 **COOL, CALM & COLLECTED** A mix of contemporary and antique pieces is the key to an elegant family home in the Thames Valley

Features

- 58 **A TASTE OF THE GOOD LIFE** The Ivins family invite us onto their East Sussex plot to share tips for growing food and raising livestock. This month: keeping hens
- 68 **FASHIONED FROM THE FOREST** One woman with a love of heritage crafts has carved a business out of the woodland around her, making original products that withstand the test of time
- 87 **LET YOUR TALENT SHINE** In this series, we meet women making the most of their hobby, plus find out how to follow in their footsteps. This month: the collector

ON THE COVER

Come into the garden
pages 21, 76 and 22

Decorate with our
brand-new CL paint
collection **page 44**
Win a stay in a classic
Airstream caravan
page 84 Keep your
own hens **page 58**
5 simple fish suppers
page 142 Vintage
treasures **page 87**





Contents

- 95 **WILD ABOUT THE DORMOUSE** Discover how one man has become devoted to this endangered mammal, encouraging an army of fellow volunteers eager to glean his knowledge
- 167 **REVITALISE YOUR VILLAGE** Our practical series to starting community schemes. This month: creating an arts venue

Food & drink

- 134 **SARAH RAVEN'S SUPERFOODS** The gardener picks the healthiest produce to eat in May: sweet potatoes
- 142 **SIMPLE DISHES FOR BUSY DAYS** Alison Walker showcases easy but delicious recipes. This month: fish suppers

Health & beauty

- 153 **HEALTH NOTES** Improve your wellbeing the natural way with our round-up
- 155 **HELP FROM THE HIVE** Add a buzz to your beauty routine with products that harness the benefits of honey, beeswax and royal jelly

News & views

- 33 **A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY** What to do, where to go and ideas to try in May
- 161 **COUNTRY IN THE CITY** Find makers and producers in Britain's urban villages
- 171 **JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN!** Support our initiative to recognise Very Important Trees
- 172 **WHERE TO BUY** Stockist details
- 173 **NEXT MONTH** in *Country Living*
- 202 **MY COUNTRYSIDE** Angela Hartnett

Reader offers

- 21 **CELEBRATE OUR 30TH BIRTHDAY!** Buy tickets for our garden party at Loseley Park and also purchase a commemorative CL mug
- 74 **MODERN RUSTIC STYLE** Introducing the new *Country Living* sofa from DFS
- 75 **SHOP AT OUR ONLINE STORE!**
- 150 **SUBSCRIBE** to *Country Living*
- 166 **TURN YOUR HOBBY INTO A BUSINESS** Buy our new bookazine
- 174 **COUNTRY LIVING READER OFFERS**

**RENEW OR TAKE OUT
A SUBSCRIPTION
TO CL THIS MONTH**
See page 150 for details

COVER CREDITS
Photograph by Ben Lawton (benlawtonphotography.co.uk). Handmade pottery, cushions, table linen and Shetland wool throws, Susie Watson Designs (susiewatsondesigns.co.uk)

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FIRST WORDS FROM THE EDITOR



Decorating my home...

will never be quite the same again, now that I can select the colours from our very own *Country Living* Paint Collection! The process of creating the range with experts Marston & Langinger has been immensely exciting – from visiting the factory where the paint is made and narrowing it down to 25 shades to working with the design team on the tin labels and colour card. It's difficult to choose my favourites, but high on the list are Hessian and Inky Blue – so much so, we've used them to redesign the look of the Country Living General Store. Check it out at shop.countryliving.co.uk and tell us what you think.

To view the entire collection of paint colours and discover decorating ideas for using them, see our feature on page 44. Also in this issue, we have a fascinating selection of quirky huts and hideaways where inventive folk have created their ideal rural escape. If you don't have the space or wherewithal for a rustic retreat of your own, how about winning a weekend stay in the Lake District in a classic Airstream, plus two pairs of stylish, weatherproof Dubarry boots (page 84)? And, finally, nothing is more guaranteed to get you in the mood for May than our beautiful piece on bluebells – turn to page 22 to be inspired.

Dary Smith

PS Don't forget to purchase your tickets to join us at our exclusive 30th birthday party on Midsummer's Day at Loseley Park in Surrey – they are selling out fast!



Follow our boards on Pinterest for more beautiful CL photos and inspiration:
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emporium

This jute bag is co-designed by Dame Judi Dench, with £1 from each sale going to The Fishermen's Mission, £5, Seasalt

Bring colour into your home using tones from the natural world – buttercup yellows, rose petal pinks and deep watery blues



Tea towels, part of a collection by Dee Hardwicke, £6 each, National Trust Shop



Set of two wooden coasters, one with an etched bee design and the other with a ladybird, £5, Pastel Lane



Lamb's wool cushion (30cm x 60cm), £49, Oates & Co

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GENERAL STORE

This pretty jumpsuit is ideal for a young girl, available in sizes from three to 18 months, £48, Coco & Wolf at Country Living General Store



Quirky, handmade solid-wood sideboard, £3250, Out There Interiors

EMPORIUM

Hand-printed, pleated lampshade featuring Rose Red Nina fabric, £65; reeded lamp base, £62: both Susie Watson Designs

Hand-knotted wool rug, available in custom or standard sizes, £1,067 (240cm x 170cm), Kelaty

Have a go at cross-stitch with this fun kit (embroidery hoop not included), £14.99, Floss & Mischief

Hang this unframed A3 Peonies print on a wall with a tablo

ftape for a relaxed look, £20, Howkapow

FIND THIS IN OUR
GENERAL
STORE
GENERAL STORE

Small patterned porcelain bowl handmade by Salisbury-based ceramicist Julie Ayton, £80

Botanical-print cotton sateen cushion (50cm x 50cm), £69, Living Union at Country Living General Store

Add storage to a hallway or kitchen with this locker-style cabinet, £1,475, Barker and Stonehouse

A photograph of a classic interior scene. In the foreground, a large armchair with a yellow, blue, and white plaid fabric sits on a light-colored wooden floor. The chair has dark wood legs with brass casters. Two decorative pillows with gold embroidery are placed on the seat. To the left of the chair is a fireplace with a white marble mantel. On the mantel sits a small wooden clock and a glass. To the right is a tall, dark wood bookshelf filled with many books. The overall atmosphere is warm and traditional.

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Create a modern country feel in a kitchen by hanging Loaf's aluminium and copper Spangle pendant light over a rustic wooden table, £65



Tabatha gold-plated pendant with semi-precious gemstone, £40, Blossoming Branch at Country Living General Store



Potter Olivia McGill uses brushstrokes of colour on a range of ceramics – blue and brown vase, £120



British wool tweed poncho with a floral lining, £140, Timothy Foxx



One-off stencilled chair, from £45; Santushti stencil, from £10: both Nicolette Tabram



Striking Koichi tableware, from £19 for a bowl, mug or side plate, Toast



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CELEBRATE OUR 30th BIRTHDAY!



Order our special *Country Living* anniversary mug and join the party at Loseley Park



Mark the occasion with our Angie Lewin mug

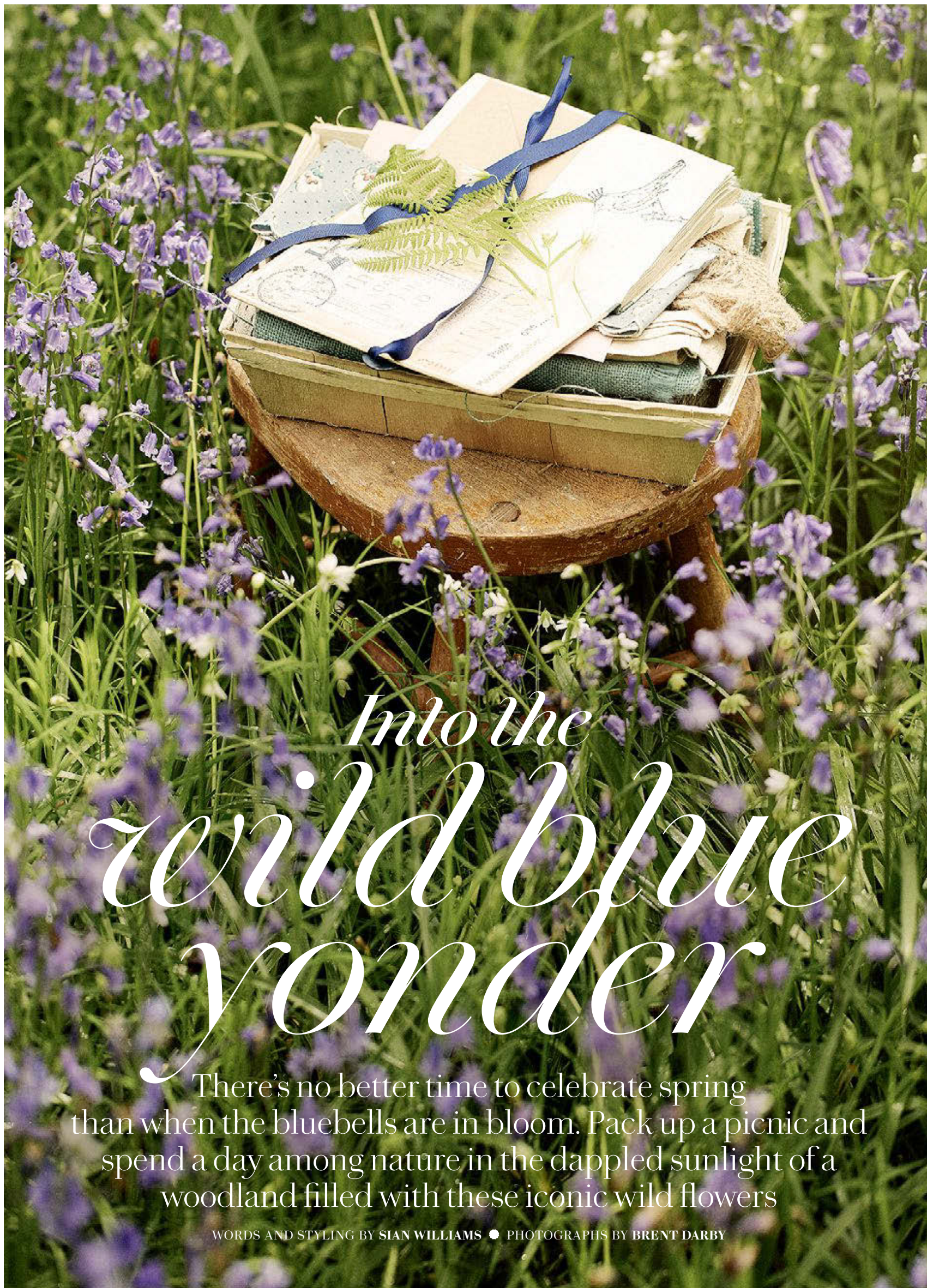
To commemorate this landmark year, we commissioned renowned artist and printmaker Angie Lewin to create an exclusive, limited-edition design. In soft hues of yellow and blue-grey, it features a beautiful pattern of wild garlic, primroses, clover and grasses, and is destined to be a collectable. Each one is handmade and hand-decorated in the UK by Burleigh at Middleport Pottery in Stoke-on-Trent, Britain's last remaining working Victorian pottery, and so fuses a wonderful sense of history with contemporary craft. **To order** a mug for £17.95, including UK p&p only, go to shop.countryliving.co.uk, call 01483 204597 or send a cheque, made payable to Country Living, to CL 30th Anniversary Mug, JEM House, Cranleigh, Surrey GU6 8ND. The mug will also be for sale on the *Country Living* stand at this year's summer shows – see countrylivingfair.com for more information.

Come to our Midsummer Party

Meet editor-in-chief Susy Smith and the CL team in the walled garden at Loseley Park in Surrey (see page 106) from 5pm-7.30pm on Wednesday 24 June 2015. Two hundred lucky readers will be greeted outside the 16th-century manor house by owner Michael More-Molyneux, who will give a brief history of his family home and its stunning grounds. Head gardener Richard Burnip and his team will then take you on a private tour of the walled garden. The event will continue with delicious canapés and sweet treats by Caper & Berry (caperandberry.co.uk) and fizz from Codorníu (codorniu.com) in The White Garden, accompanied by a string quartet. You will leave with a goodie bag as a memento of this special event. Tickets cost £55 and are limited to the first 200 readers who apply. **To book a place**, email country.living@hearst.co.uk.

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Into the wild blue yonder

There's no better time to celebrate spring than when the bluebells are in bloom. Pack up a picnic and spend a day among nature in the dappled sunlight of a woodland filled with these iconic wild flowers

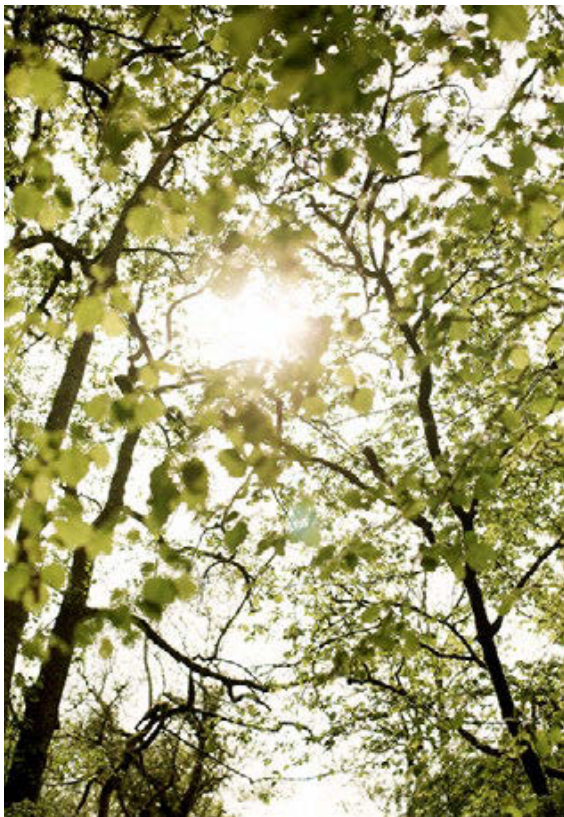
WORDS AND STYLING BY SIAN WILLIAMS ● PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRENT DARBY

A woman with dark hair, wearing a green sweater, a white skirt with a blue floral pattern, and black boots, stands on a large, moss-covered tree branch in a lush forest. She is looking upwards. The forest floor is covered in green ferns and small purple flowers. The background is filled with dense green foliage and tree trunks.

OPPOSITE Vintage
child's stool, from £5,
Morgan. Similar
wooden box trays,
from £3.25, Pipit.
Handmade notebook,
£35, Jessie Chorley.
Cotton tea towels,
£5.50 each,
GreenGate at
Occa-Home

THIS PAGE A pair of
binoculars and an
identification book
will help you make the
most of the day. Take a
sketchbook to draw
the flora and fauna
you spot and create a
wildlife record.
Vintage jumper, £25;
vintage skirt, £25
(worn throughout):
both Jessie Chorley.
Binoculars, from £99,
Jessops

SEASONAL INSPIRATION



THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT AND MIDDLE Bluebells spread slowly, so a dense drift is a good indicator of ancient woodland **TOP RIGHT** Native bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) have narrow leaves and flower mostly on one side of a slender nodding stem

ABOVE LEFT Dry, dead wood found on the forest floor makes really good kindling for campfire cooking. A little bucket barbecue, which is easily portable, is ideal for a picnic. Galvanised **bucket barbecue**, £24, Loop The Loop **ABOVE RIGHT** Man's **shirt**, from £55,

Ben Sherman. Boy's blue and white Los Trancos **shirt**, £44, Hollister. Similar beach **chair**, £86.67, Gallant & Jones. Vintage **blanket**, from £149, Jane Beck Welsh Blankets. Vintage children's **stool**, from £5; vintage shopping **basket**, £8: both Morgan. Similar

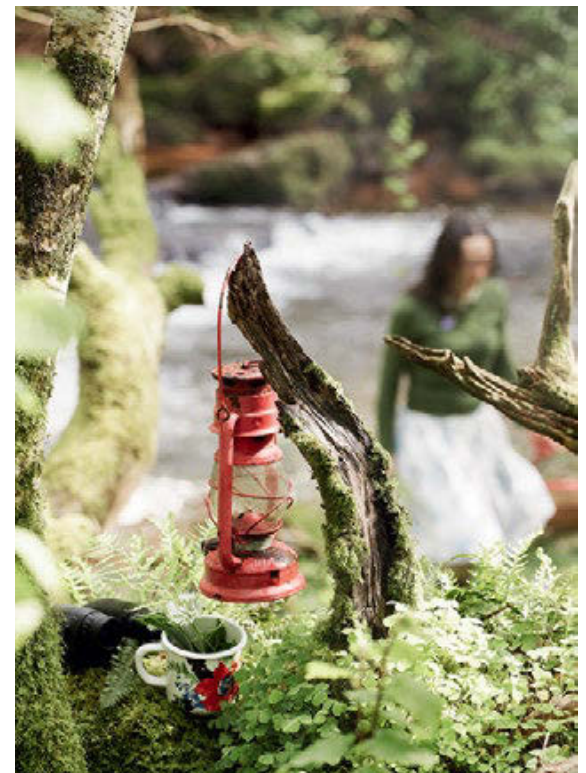
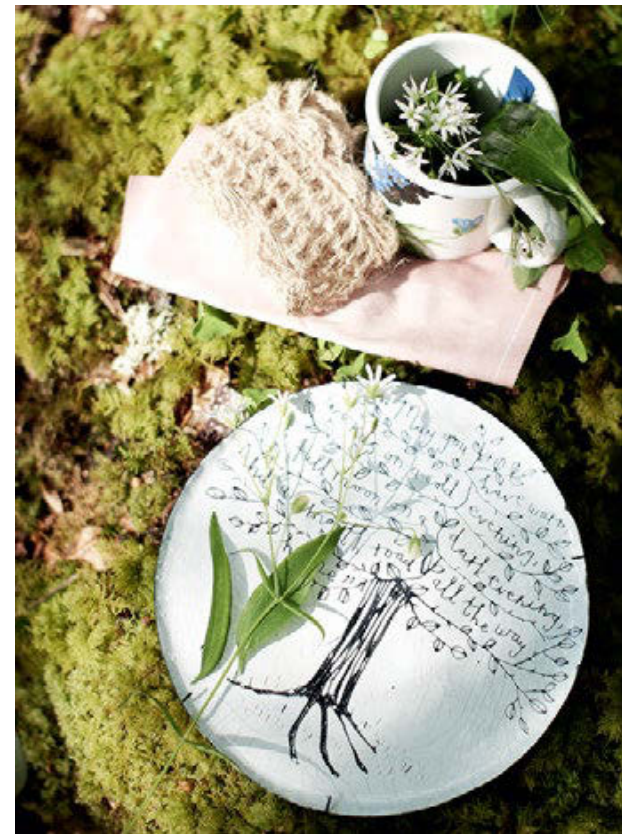
enamel **plates**, £2.50, Tesco Direct. Enamel **mugs**, £12.50, Joules. **Jam jar**, from £7.99 (set of 12), Lakeland **OPPOSITE** Similar plain whippet/lurcher **collars**, from £9, Black Dog Trading. Similar **dog leads** (with trigger hooks), £5, Blendbetter. All other details, as before ➔

A carpet
of bluebells
provides
a magical
contrast
with the
fresh greens
of spring
leaves





Be careful not to trample
bluebells and wild flowers as you
walk. Set up a picnic area on the edge
of where they are growing so you can
admire their colour at close hand
and be surrounded by the sweet
fragrance – particularly heady
after a shower of rain



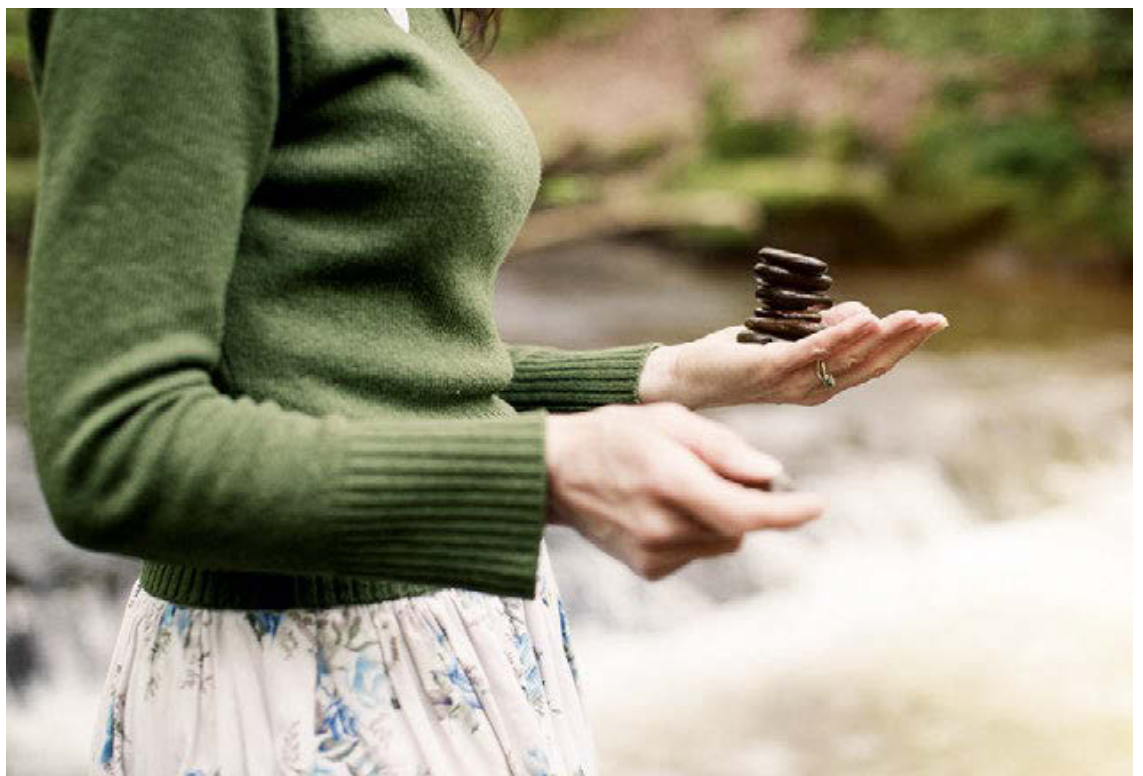
OPPOSITE
Vintage Welsh
blanket, from £149,
Jane Beck Welsh
Blankets.
THIS PAGE, TOP
LEFT Vintage Box
Brownie **camera**, £15;
basket (on ground),
from £8: both Morgan.
TOP RIGHT
Add a touch of
childhood nostalgia to
your picnic basket
with enamelware
plates and mugs.

Pink cotton buffet
napkin, £14.50 (roll of
25), Pipii. **Raffia trim**,
from a selection,
V V Rouleaux. Enamel
mug, £12.50, Joules.
Hand-painted enamel
Family Tree **plate**,
£225, Buddug
ABOVE LEFT
Create a simple
carrier for a picnic
rug with three to
four strands of garden
twine. Make two
loops to hold the rug

and tie together to
carry easily on your
shoulder.
Vintage wool **blanket**,
£149, Jane Beck
Welsh Blankets
ABOVE MIDDLE
Bluebells are
known as fairy
flowers. In folklore,
it's thought that
anyone who wears one
is compelled to
tell the truth.
Vintage **jumper**,
as before. Delyth

enamel **tie pin**,
£40, Buddug
ABOVE RIGHT
Delicate, fresh
green shamrocks,
also known as Irish
clover, thrive among
the moss-covered
tree trunks in
wet woodland.
Old red fisherman's
lamp, £6, Morgan.
Binoculars, from
£99, Jessops.
Enamel floral **mug**,
£12.50, Joules ➔

SEASONAL INSPIRATION



TOP LEFT Matt Hayes Telescopic **Fishing Starter Kit**, £29.99, Homebase. **Shirt**, from £55, Ben Sherman. Similar plain whippet/lurcher **collars**, from £9, Black Dog Trading

TOP MIDDLE Soapstone **birds**, from £2.50 each; vintage leather **wallet**, £5; all Morgan. Scalloped zinc tealight **dishes**, £2.50 each, Pipii. **Tackle box** (sold as part of Telescopic

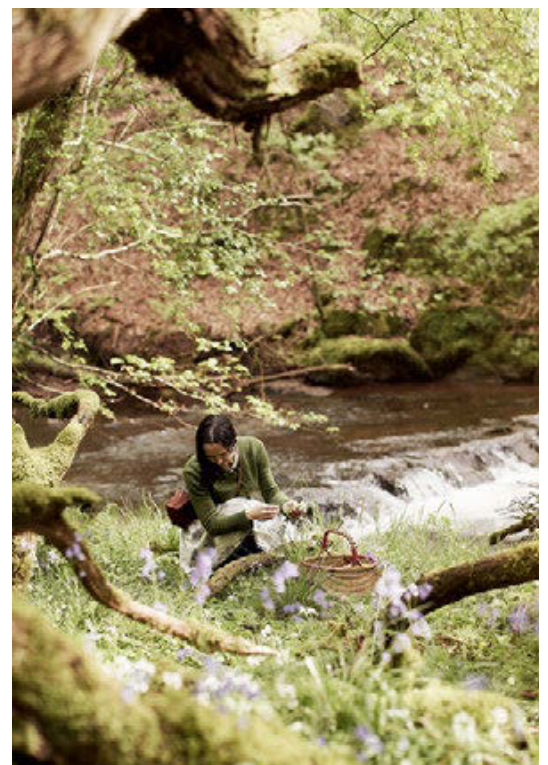
Fishing Starter Kit), £29.99, Homebase

ABOVE LEFT Collect interestingly shaped stones to make simple displays inside jam jars. Tie a length of twine around the neck to carry. **Jam jars**, from £7.99 (set of 12), Lakeland. Nutscene Flax **twine**, £13.95 (450g), Fred Aldous

ABOVE RIGHT Re-kindle a childhood pleasure by skimming

flat stones across a river.

RIGHT Wild garlic or ramsons (*Allium ursinum*) grow in abundance on riverbanks and have a pungent scent. Collect the flowers and fresh, new leaves to flavour soups and stews, make a vibrant green pesto or eat raw in salads. Vintage **basket**, from £8; Box Brownie **camera**, £15: both Morgan. All other details, as before ➔



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SEASONAL INSPIRATION

THIS PICTURE Take along a few rustic accessories for your picnic. A wooden crate can serve as a table, while small stools are easily portable. Sturdy vintage shopping baskets are perfect for carrying food.

Old **crates**, from £9 each; vintage child's **stool**, from £5; vintage shopping **baskets**, from £8 each; red fisherman's **lamp**, £6: all Morgan. Cream enamel **jug**, £18; galvanised bucket **barbecue**, £24: both Loop The Loop. Floral enamel **mugs**, £12.50 each, Joules. Similar

enamel **plates**, £2.50, Tesco Direct. Wild Animals stainless-steel **flask**, £16.99; **jam jars** (in basket), from £7.99 (set of 12): all Lakeland. Vintage Hamlyn **books**, from £4.50, Andrew Morton Books. Golf **umbrella**, from £12, ebay. Vintage wool **blanket**, £149, Jane Beck Welsh Blankets

 *For stockists, see **Where to Buy***

FIVE BLUEBELL WOODS

1 Brede High Woods, East Sussex Enjoy unspoilt ancient woodland and discover rare wildlife at the second largest Woodland Trust site.
2 Hackfall, North Yorkshire This ancient wood has grottos, glades, rustic temples, waterfalls and an impressive number of birds.
3 Heartwood Forest, Hertfordshire A new plantation is being created with help

from community volunteers. Rare butterflies and bluebells thrive here.
4 Coed Cefn, Powys Dominated by a canopy of oak and beech, this is a carpet of blue in May.
5 Glen Finglas, Stirling Walk, climb or cycle around this vast terrain of ancient woodland, open heathland and lochs in the heart of the Trossachs National Park. 





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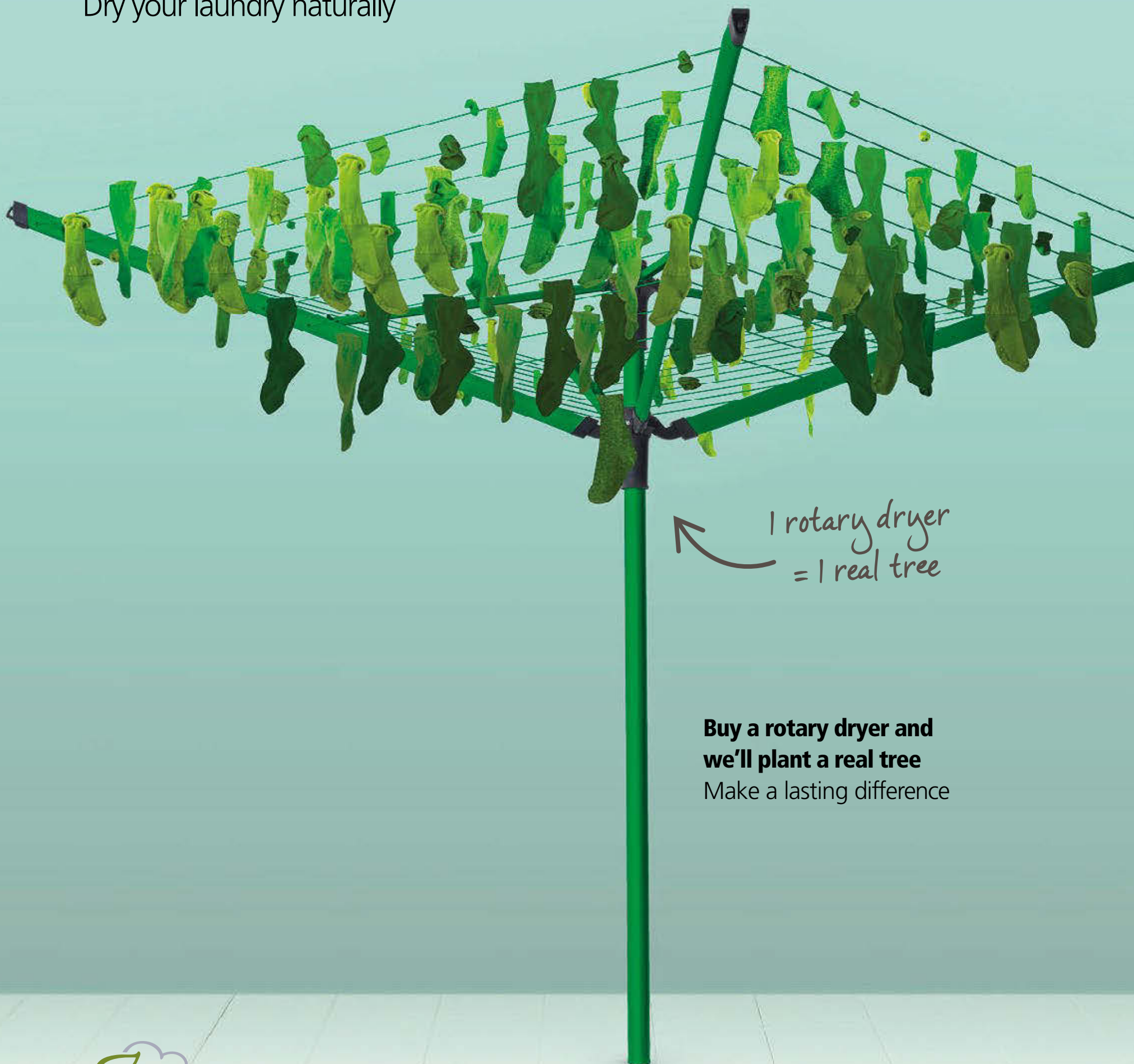
Camden in
Cerise Velvet

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#LoveNature

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a month in the country

WHAT TO SEE *May*



CELEBRATE MAY DAY

The first of May was once regarded as a very auspicious time of year, a herald of the warmth and abundant food that would come with the following months. The earliest record of celebrations was in the Roman Republic when Floralia, the festival of Flora the Roman Goddess of Flowers, took place on 27 April. Closer to home, the Celts celebrated Beltane by lighting hilltop fires on 'tan' hills, around which they danced 'sunwise'. The more commonly recognised May Day celebrations began in the 15th century when nature's fecundity was celebrated by the collecting of May blossoms to decorate houses (a practice known as gathering the May) and maypoles were cut from tall trees, erected on village greens and garlanded in flowers and ribbons to act as the centre of the revelries. The merriment would include dancing and the crowning of a May Queen, a young girl dressed in white, to preside over the day. Celebrations became so raucous that maypoles were actually banned in 1644. After a decline in popularity, May Day is experiencing a revival in schools and villages across the country.



DOWN ON THE FARM

Helen Browning reveals what is taking place on her mixed organic holding in Wiltshire

WE ARE ROLLING in clover during May, as it grows faster now than at any other time of year. So this month it's all about silage making and, if the weather's good, hay, too. It's a nerve-wracking time, as producing enough good-quality forage is crucial for our dairy's performance next winter. But first we need at least a week of dry, warm weather – unfortunately

the British climate can be unpredictable, hence the frayed nerves. May Bank Holiday brings our mad day of pig racing. The whole village piles into our local for the spectacle of eight strangely spotted pigs (so we can tell them apart) trotting down the racetrack following a bucket of feed. The betting pool raises lots of money for charity,



and a hilarious time is had by all.

For more about Helen's farm, see helenbrowningorganic.co.uk.



IN NATURE

Naturalist Simon King offers tips about the wild visitors in your garden

MANY SUBURBAN and rural areas of Britain are home to badger communities but these large members of the weasel family can be surprisingly hard to spot. Now, however, is an ideal time as the new cubs are above ground. Near a sett is best, although precautions should be taken not to disturb them. Arrive a good hour and a half before sunset, ensure

any wind carries your scent away and settle in a spot where your outline is covered by a bush or tree. Expect to wait until after dusk, in total silence, keeping an eye on the sett entrances. With luck, the badgers will emerge in the last rays of spring light. A scattering of peanuts near the sett could also encourage the badgers to remain for a while after emergence, and



may stimulate them to come out a little earlier*.

To learn about Simon's work, see simonkingwildlife.com.

ENJOY A SLOW SUNDAY

Why not set aside one day a week to savour the simple pleasures in life?



STILL-LIFE PAINTING

Art classes at school may well have been the last time you had a brush in your hand, but there's no better way to capture the delicate beauty of spring blooms than with paint and paper. Set up an arrangement on your kitchen table with flowers or foliage from your garden or local hedgerows. It doesn't need to be complicated; in fact, the simpler, the better – a single stem in a pretty teacup can be very effective. Watercolour paints are relatively inexpensive, require a loose, fluid technique (considered to be therapeutic) and dry quicker than oil or acrylic. Don't try to create a replica of what's in front of you, instead look at the light, colours and shapes. Study the flowers and the shades within them – a white bloom is often, on closer inspection, anything but.

If painting from scratch is too daunting, discover the latest grown-up colouring books instead. Art Therapy: Extraordinary Gardens by Sophie Leblanc (Jacqui Small, £12.99) features 100 designs to fill in.



MAKE A NATURE TABLE

Don't let your still-life arrangements go to waste – create a display for others to enjoy. Place single specimens in labelled jars and add a matchbox with something a little gruesome such as a dead stag beetle to fascinate young and old alike.



BREW AN INFUSION

Pick young leaves of mint or camomile flowers from your garden and steep in water that's hot, but not boiling, for an infusion that's nothing like dried versions. Be adventurous; nettle is surprisingly refreshing.



A SIMPLE MAKE... GARDENER'S HALF-APRON

This design is ideal for keeping tools to hand

- 1 Back a H74cm x W60cm piece of heavy linen with patterned fabric of the same size – right sides showing.
- 2 Fold in all edges of both fabrics to create a 2cm inside seam and pin.
- 3 Sew up the bottom shorter edge.
- 4 With the plain linen fabric showing, fold up the bottom edge – revealing the pattern – pulling it up far enough to make room for deep pockets and pin.
- 5 Sew up both sides of the apron, from the bottom to the waistband.
- 6 To create the pockets, sew upright from the bottom to the top of the patterned section, choosing the size and quantity of pockets you want.
- 7 For the strap, sew 2.5-3m herringbone-weave cotton trimming ribbon to the middle section of the waistband – this will allow the strap to wrap around and tie up at the front.

3

COURSES... IN HEN KEEPING

- 1 **Raising Chickens For Meat** Humble By Nature, Penalt, Monmouthshire Spend a morning getting to grips with the care of healthy poultry and an afternoon learning how to dispatch humanely and dress them. 31 May, £95 (01600 714595; humblebynature.com).
- 2 **Chicken Keeping For Beginners** Bank View Farm, Totley Bents, South Yorkshire This two-and-a-half-hour course provides all the information you need to become a back-garden henkeeper. 17 May, £25 per person; £40 per couple (01142 363297; bankviewfarm.co.uk).
- 3 **Group Chicken Course** Chicken School, Swindon, Wiltshire This will help you select the best breed and provide advice on care. Includes lunch. 24 May, £55 (01793 331796; chickenschool.co.uk).
For more on keeping hens, see our feature on Walnuts Farm in this issue. ➔



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N
NEPTUNE

MEET A COUNTRY CHARACTER



As he sat listening to a group of independent farmers and small producers speak at the Oxford Real Farming Conference in January last year, Nigel Akehurst (above) felt determined to find out more about them. He swapped his marketing job at Red Tractor for his trusty 125 Vespa scooter, named Veronica, and embarked on a six-week road trip around the UK, during which he visited as many of these farms and food projects as possible. The journey not only led Nigel to move back to his family farm in East Sussex but also inspired him to share the stories he had heard with others, and so *Indie Farmer* was born. This online food and farming magazine includes his stories of unusual artisan producers who sell direct to their customers. With a passion for sustainable family farms and a better food culture, he says, "I hope the site will encourage more farmers to think outside the box."

For more information, visit indiefarmer.com.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Ridding

From the Old English 'ryding', meaning 'clearing' to describe a green lane that passes through a wood; for example, Ridding Bay in Cumbria.*



NEWS YOU CAN USE

Fresh, locally grown produce, plenty of homemade creations and the opportunity to meet the people behind your food – there are so many reasons to support your local marketplace and this month there's an extra one – 13-27 May marks Love Your Local Market (LYLM) fortnight. Organised by The National Association of British Market Authorities, it's all about celebrating the market culture that was once a cornerstone of every major settlement in the country. Although suffering hard times in the past, due to the increasing number and competitive pricing of retail outlets, markets are experiencing a revival of late thanks to occasions like LYLM. More than 900 markets took part last year and the organisation is hoping for a bigger turnout this year. It is also a great opportunity for entrepreneurial talent, with 10,000-plus pitches provided for new traders since 2012. Head to loveyourlocalmarket.org.uk to get involved.

For daily countryside news, go to countryliving.co.uk/news.

5 ANTIQUES FAIRS

3 For the green-fingered Fine Art, Decorative & Antiques Fair, Cothay Manor, Somerset; 29-31 May Explore the grounds of this medieval manor before choosing from 30 stalls (cothaymanor.co.uk).

1 For the beginner Beccles Antiques Street Market, Suffolk; 3 May Find silver, china, linen and clocks in Beccles where 100 dealers will share their expertise (becclesbusinessassociation.co.uk).

4 For the historian Whitstable Castle Vintage, Retro & Antique Fair, Kent; 31 May Set in this 15th-century castle and grounds is a mix of vintage and modern (whitstablecastlevintageretrofair.webs.com).

2 For the eccentric Burton Court One Day Quality Antiques Fair, Herefordshire; 17 May After perusing the eclectic displays of decorative antiques, enjoy cakes in the café (burtoncourt.com).

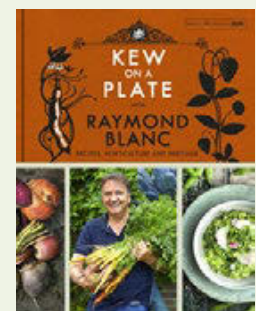
5 For the veteran Helmsley Antiques & Collectors Fair, North Yorkshire; 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 May Offers an array of collectables every Friday in the town hall (dmlfairs.com). ➔



Eco tip

Make a bee hotel by removing the lid of a large coffee tin and filling the container with rolled-up paper tubes

FROM YOUR ARMCHAIR



With The Royal Botanic Gardens, Raymond Blanc explores the heritage of our favourite plants and uncovers the secrets of growing and cooking them (Headline, £25)**

*TAKEN FROM THE BATSFORD COMPANION TO LOCAL HISTORY BY STEPHEN FRIAR (BATSFORD, £19.95) **CL READERS WILL RECEIVE A SPECIAL 20 PER CENT DISCOUNT AND CAN ORDER THE BOOK FOR £20 INCL. P&P BY QUOTING THE OFFER CODE KEWCL WHEN CALLING 01235 827702. OFFER ENDS ON 10 MAY 2015



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NEPTUNE

FURTHER AFIELD



A few miles from Kirkby Lonsdale is **Cowan Bridge**, home of the Clergy Daughters School, which Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte and Emily Brontë attended in the 1820s. The poor conditions there inspired the dreaded Lowood School featured in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (haworth-village.org.uk). A half-hour drive will take you to the heart of the **Lake District** (above) with numerous walking routes and viewpoints (lakedistrict.gov.uk).



LOCAL LANDMARK

Devil's Bridge, which crosses the River Lune on the outskirts of town, was built in 1370, and is Grade I-listed ➔



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT 'Ruskin's View' on the edge of town; buy treats at Chocolat; peruse covetable homeware at Parma Violet; stay in style at The Royal Hotel



A NIGHT AND A DAY IN... KIRKBY LONSDALE

Stay...

At The Royal Hotel, a restored Georgian townhouse, which presides over the 19th-century market square in this Cumbrian town and features exposed beams, flagstone floors, open fires and a sweeping staircase. The 14 boutique-style bedrooms are each elegantly decorated with slipper baths and vintage-style furniture, while others include four-poster beds. Many have views over the Yorkshire Dales. Breakfast options include Cartmel smoked salmon and scrambled free-range eggs or a full English with locally sourced sausages and bacon. Double B&B from £100 (01524 271966; royalhotelkirkbylonsdale.co.uk).

Eat...

A three-course meal in The Royal's Victorian dining room with dishes such as roast courgette linguine with pea, mint and mozzarella or warm ham hock salad with ricotta, roast figs and pine nuts. Or try homemade pasta at Avanti, which serves a range of Mediterranean fare (baravanti.com). Alternatively, sample the food at The Highwayman from chef Jason 'Bruno' Birkbeck, who has given the menu a Heston Blumenthal-inspired twist. His take on a Ploughman's, which includes local quail's eggs, crackling and a shot of Thwaites Shandy, is not to be missed (highwaymaninn.co.uk).

Browse...

The historic high street and pop into Parma Violet to peruse the selection of quirky, vintage-style home accessories, clothing, books and gifts, including prints by CL illustrator Angela Harding (parmaviolet.co.uk). Rummage for antique furniture on the top floor of Country Cousins (01524 272291) or Dales Antiques & Interiors (01524 272252), sample handmade luxury chocolates at Chocolat (chocolatmine.co.uk) or discover stylish fashions at Bell Clothing, which stocks French Connection, Great Plains and Joules among other labels (01524 273539).

GET IN TOUCH

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Don't miss The 28th Annual Kirkby Lonsdale Brass Band Competition on 21 June. Each one marches down the main street to the market square where they perform hymns, marches and tunes (kirkbylonsdale.co.uk).

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country property currently on the market*

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Bede House Farm is a 14th-century, Grade II-listed property in the village of North Luffenham, just south of Rutland Water. The ground floor, which you enter through a quarry-tiled entrance hall, features exposed timbers and period fireplaces. The modern country-style kitchen includes a gas-fired Aga, flagstone flooring, a pantry with original bread oven and a striking spiral staircase leading to one of the bedrooms. A covered courtyard with a slate floor adjoins the house and has its own well and water pump.

Upstairs there are four further bedrooms, including a master suite with a stone and herringbone fireplace and en suite with roll-top bath. The south- and east-facing gardens are largely laid to lawn, with climbing roses, wisteria and honeysuckle covering the stone walls, as well as wisteria and a fig tree. There is a wooden summerhouse and glazed potting shed, plus a pergola, which leads around the south end of the garden past a well to the westerly enclosed terrace area. 

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAMY; SIMON BEVAN; GETTY; ANNA JURY; EMMA LEE; GARY WILLIAMS.
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JO BIRD; JAMES CAREY; JOANNA KERR



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ALL IS CALM

As a warm neutral tone, this makes the perfect backdrop to fresh white, blush pink, pale green and teal. Combine misshapen matt-finished ceramics, block-printed patterned fabrics, crushed linen, painted mismatched chairs and a hint of weathered metal to continue the relaxed and pared-back style. ➔

This soft and chalky pebble shade will impart a serene mood to a room



COMPLEMENTARY TONES

Create a unified look throughout your home by coordinating the colours in different rooms with the tone in the hallway.

Choosing a neutral shade, such as this versatile soft stone, for an entrance allows more flexibility elsewhere as it is easy to partner with other shades. Here, a harmonising subtle green wall colour, natural linen upholstery and light wood floors continue the calm and tranquil feel reflected in the hallway. Offset the pale shades with a handful of contrasting tones, such as those found on a piece of painted furniture, to keep the scheme interesting.



SIMPLE STYLE

Combining practical elements, such as a metro tiled wall and a cool marble worksurface, with a Nordic grey/blue gives a utilitarian kitchen a bright and relaxed look.



PALE AND INTERESTING

A chalky plaster pink mixed with white woodwork makes a refreshing choice for a garden room and is an alternative to the usual botanical greens. Link the interior to the outside with woven furniture, wire accessories and a leaf-print blind.



PRETTY IN PINK

Distressed painted metal baskets and shelving in pale greens and whites sit beautifully with this dusty rose shade and further emphasise the garden room feel. Add outdoor items such as a lantern and terracotta pots. ➡

BOLD & BEAUTIFUL

Stronger colours, including this dove grey, can add drama to a bathroom or other small space, especially in homes with period features. For a modern edge, add touches of yellow, such as this eye-catching patterned blind.



OPPOSITES ATTRACT

Introduce metallics and sunny yellow accessories to contrast with the warm grey. Pieces of painted furniture in different colours can also bring an extra decorative element to the room.



HIDDEN DETAIL

Painting the interior of a linen-press or kitchen larder in a contrasting colour can be very effective. This subtle grey-lilac has a pretty, clean quality next to the distressed white shutter doors.

A FRESH TOUCH

A warm yet pale grey-blue mixed with white painted floorboards has a light, airy effect. Jaunty curtains, pretty floral bedspreads and fabric bunting with splashes of red and pink enliven the scheme, while a painted striped-front cabinet adds a sense of fun – ideal for a child's bedroom. ➔





PAINTING PROJECT

Pink and grey make a stylish choice for a bedroom.

To create a similar effect on a chest, remove the drawers and handles, and paint in sections by applying thin layers of eggshell paint, in several coats, to sanded and primed wood. ➔

THE COUNTRY LIVING PAINT COLLECTION

Carefully developed by the *Country Living* decorating team, our collection with Marston & Langinger includes both classic and contemporary tones that are gentle, pale and subtle, and many have been based on period colours we love and know work well. There are 25 colours ranging from neutrals and soft pinks to stronger tones such as teal, offering shades that are timeless and easy to use with a few stronger hues for bolder effects. Finishes include chalky matt interior emulsion, interior eggshell and exterior eggshell.



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DINING ROOM

Paint Walls in Hessian chalky interior matt emulsion, £85/5 litres; cabinet and table in Cotton interior eggshell, £47/2.5 litres; bench in Snow Goose interior eggshell, £25/litre; chairs in Teal and Gentle Green interior eggshell, both £25/litre: all Country Living Paint Collection from Marston & Langer at Country Living General Store. Pendant **light**, similar from Skinflint Design. **On cabinet** **Candlestick**, £35, Pimpernel & Partners. Wire **bowl**, £8.95, Rockett St George. Enamel **jug**, similar from Home Barn. **Tray**, similar from Nkuku. Wonki Ware **crocker**, from £14.95/side plate; White Everyday **milk jug**, £32; **teapot**, £95; linen **napkins**, £12 each: all The Conran Shop. **On table** Glass **bottle** (just seen), £4; metal **mug**, £20/set of four: both Pimpernel & Partners. Vintage berry **serving spoons**, £14.50 each, RE. Glass **bottle**, £15.95, Grand Illusions. Wonki Ware dinner **plates**, £25 each; petrol-blue linen **napkins**, £12 each: all The Conran Shop. Pokal **glasses**, 50p each, Ikea. Glass **milk bottle** (as vase), £8.75/three, Pipii. **Tablecloth** in Ashok duck egg linen, £126/m, Penny Morrison. **Cushion cover** in Lusley duck egg linen, £68/m, Cloth & Clover. Unpainted **chairs** and **table**, from a selection, Laura Ashley and antiques fairs. Unpainted **cabinet**, similar from Home Barn. Unpainted Nornas **bench** (just seen), £70, Ikea



LIVING ROOM

Paint Living-room wall in Gentle Green chalky interior matt emulsion, £85/5 litres; hallway wall in Limestone chalky interior matt emulsion, £85/5 litres; woodwork in Cotton interior eggshell, £47/2.5 litres; console in Inky Blue interior eggshell, £25/litre; chair in Swedish Blue interior eggshell, £25/litre: all Country Living Paint Collection from Marston & Langer at Country Living General Store. Fella medium **sofa** in Thatch, £1,215, Loaf. **Cushion cover** in Upwick Mist linen, £68/m, Cloth & Clover. Cream linen **throw**, £260, The Conran Shop. **Stool**, £48, Grand Illusions. **Teapot**, ebay find. Unpainted Elgin spindle **chair**, £200/pair, Laura Ashley. Unpainted **console table**, £249, Scumble Goosie. Wire **tray**, from a selection, Baileys. Glass **vase**, £30, Garden Trading. Botanical drawing **plates**, £4 each, Garden & Wood. Vintage **books**, from £3.50 each, Pimpernel & Partners. Desk **lamp**, £125, French Connection. **Tumbler**, £2.80, Grand Illusions. One-off reclaimed **wood panel**, from a selection, Speckled Wood. **Trug** and shopping **bag**, both from a selection, Baileys. Country Living special-edition **bicycle** (available in duck egg blue or meadow green), £645, Pashley and Country Living General Store. **Rug**, £399, Dash & Albert



KITCHEN

Paint Kitchen units in Swedish Blue interior eggshell, £47/2.5 litres, Country Living Paint Collection from Marston & Langer at Country Living General Store. Bialetti **coffee maker**, £30, Labour and Wait. Korken **jar**, £3, Ikea. White porcelain **spoons**, from £9.50, Divertimenti. White waffle and linen **tea towels**, from a selection, The Conran Shop and The Linen Works. Wooden **boards**, from a selection, Rowen & Wren and Baileys. Medium spongeware **jug**, £25, Hinchcliffe & Barber. **Glasses** and **mugs**, from a selection, Ikea, Pimpernel & Partners and Grand Illusions. Vitreous enamel **utensils**, £45.50/set of six, Bliss Home. Metro white **tiles**, from 19.50/sq m, Topps Tiles



GARDEN ROOM

Paint Walls in Plaster Pink chalky interior matt emulsion; ceiling in Eiderdown chalky interior matt emulsion, both £47/2.5 litres; woodwork and trug in Cotton interior eggshell, £25/litre: all Country Living Paint Collection from Marston & Langer at Country Living General Store. **Blind** in Melbury old blue linen (F3824/04), £61/m, Colefax and Fowler. Byholma **armchair**, £80; Lindved **table**, £15: both Ikea. Pale Rosewood linen **throw**, £260, The Conran Shop. **Cushion cover** in Himbleton Mallow linen, £78/m, Cloth & Clover. Grainsack **cushion**, similar from Parna. **Tools** and **seed packets**, from a selection, Garden & Wood. Galvanised **tray**, £11.95, Grand Illusions. **Jam jar**, £3, Labour and Wait. **String**, **labels** and **lantern**, all from a selection, Baileys. **Jug**, £16.95, Maxwell & Williams. Pendant **light**, similar from Skinflint Design. **Mirror**, from a selection; terracotta **pots**, £33.65/set of 12; **basket**, £12: all Grand Illusions. Wire **storage rack**, £28, Rockett St George. **Ink bottle**, £10; vintage **book**, from £3.50; sewing **jar**, £6: all Pimpernel & Partners. **Bag**, £23, The Linen Works. Similar **plimsolls**, £24, Cath Kidston ➔



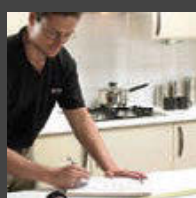
Kitchen - White Star with Matt Dakkar Tullymore Doors
Mrs Farmer, Tonbridge, Kent



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BATHROOM

Paint Walls in Twine interior eggshell, £85/5 litres; stool painted in Limestone interior eggshell, £25/litre: both Country Living Paint Collection from Marston & Langinger at Country Living General Store. Unpainted Elgin **stool**, £75, Laura Ashley. Ochre linen **throw**, £260, The Conran Shop. Zinc **bowl**, £30, French Connection. Linen hand **towel**, £12, The Linen Works. **Bath**, similar from Catchpole & Rye. **Blind** in Agnes yellow linen, £84/m, Rapture & Wright. Côté Bastide Vetyver **toiletries**, from £27/250ml bottle of shower gel; **soap**, £2.50: all RE. **Ceramics**, from a selection, Baileys. Wall **sconces**, similar from antiques fairs. **Chandelier**, similar from Laura Ashley



LINEN CLOSET

Paint Wall in Winter Sky chalky interior matt emulsion, £47/2.5 litres; cupboard interior in Old Lilac interior eggshell, £25/litre: both Country Living Paint Collection from Marston & Langinger at Country Living General Store. White linen **bathrobe**, £120, The Linen Works. Similar **cupboard**, Super Sucre cupboard, £995, Loaf. *Inside cupboard* Hand-embroidered framed **panel**, lace-panel **cushions** and **linens**, antiques fairs finds. **Jugs**, from £7.50 each, Ikea. Glass **bottles**, similar from Home Barn. **Towels** and **linens**, from a selection, The Linen Works and The Conran Shop



CHILD'S BEDROOM

Paint Walls in Icicle chalky interior matt emulsion, £85/5 litres; ceiling in Cotton chalky interior matt emulsion, £47/2.5 litres; cabinet in Eiderdown and Village Green interior eggshell, both £25/litre: all Country Living Paint Collection from Marston & Langinger at Country Living General Store. **Curtains** in Sail Away linen (224341), £56/m, Sanderson. Irja **curtain rod**, £1.25; Syrlig **curtain rings with clips**, £3/pack of ten: both Ikea. Paper **pom poms**, £15/set three, Pipii. Wooden **lorry**, from a selection, Baileys. Cardboard **letters**, £2.50 each, RE. Ceramic rabbit **lamp**, £60, Rockett St George. Antique **chair**, similar from Home Barn. Similar **bed**, Oliver single bedstead, £550 (without mattress), The Wrought Iron and Brass Bed Company. Floral **bunting**, from £15.50, ZigZag Bunting. Provence Rose **cushion cover**, £16; drawstring **bag**, £8; **teddy**, £10; similar **bedspread**, from a selection: all Cath Kidston. **Teepee**, £132, Rowen & Wren. **Rabbit** toy, similar from Melody and Me, Country Living General Store. **Chandelier**, similar from Laura Ashley



BEDROOM PROJECT

Paint Wall in Seashell interior eggshell, £47/2.5 litres; chest of drawers in Storm and Twine interior eggshell, both £25/litre; antiques fair chair, ladder and skirting in Cotton interior eggshell, £25/litre: all Country Living Paint Collection from Marston & Langinger at Country Living General Store. Unpainted **chest of drawers**, £469, Scumble Goosie. Paper dove **garland**, £5.95, Rockett St George. French linen **tea towel**, £15; **jar**, £3; market **basket**, £20; school **slate**, £9.50: all Labour and Wait. Tin **clip**, 45p, RE. Pink Everyday Espresso **cup**, £20, The Conran Shop. Wooden **tray**, £10.80, Grand Illusions. Glass **bottle set and holder**, £22, Pimpernel & Partners. **Brushes**, from a selection, Baileys. **Cushion cover** in Dormston Rose linen, £68/m, Cloth & Clover

i For stockist details, see *Where to Buy*



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A TASTE OF THE GOOD LIFE

In our practical new series, Bella Ivins invites us onto the Sussex plot she shares with husband Nick and daughters Peggy and Flora to reveal their tips for growing your own food, raising livestock and making the most of fresh produce in simple recipes

This month: keeping hens

INTERVIEW BY RUTH CHANDLER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW MONTGOMERY • RECIPE BY ALISON WALKER



HOW-TO VIDEOS
WATCH OUR HEN-BUYING GUIDE
AT [COUNTRYLIVING.CO.UK/
WALNUTS-FARM](http://COUNTRYLIVING.CO.UK/WALNUTS-FARM)

----- YOU WILL NEED -----



(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT)

BASKET Collect freshly laid eggs in this essential piece of kit, partly filled with straw to prevent them rolling into each other and breaking.

OYSTER SHELL A supplement that provides calcium to strengthen eggshells – mount the dispenser at the foot of the house and the hens will peck at it as required.

LAYERS' PELLETS Combining vegetable proteins, minerals

and vitamins, along with natural pigments to improve yolk colour, these form the bulk of a chicken's diet. Available in organic and non-organic forms.

DRINKER This galvanised fountain design works on a vacuum basis – once the inner chamber is topped up with water and the outer cover is replaced, it lets out only enough to fill the integrated saucer.

CIDER VINEGAR The nutrients in this natural tonic boost

immunity, aid digestion and promote glossy feathers. Use 20ml per litre in a plastic drinker (unsuitable for metal).

STRAW Line the nestbox with a generous amount so your chickens have a comfortable, deep area in which to lay. It also helps keep the eggs clean.

FEEDER A steady supply of pellets is released from the central container as the flock eats those in the base, while the rain cover keeps feed dry.

SCISSORS Young point-of-lay birds need one set of their flight feathers clipped before joining the flock to prevent them launching themselves off the roof of the hen house and flying over fences and hedges.

SCRAPER Clean the floor, nesting boxes and perches of the coop once a week with a tool, such as an onion hoe or stripping knife from a DIY store, and add the nitrogen-rich droppings to the compost heap. ➡

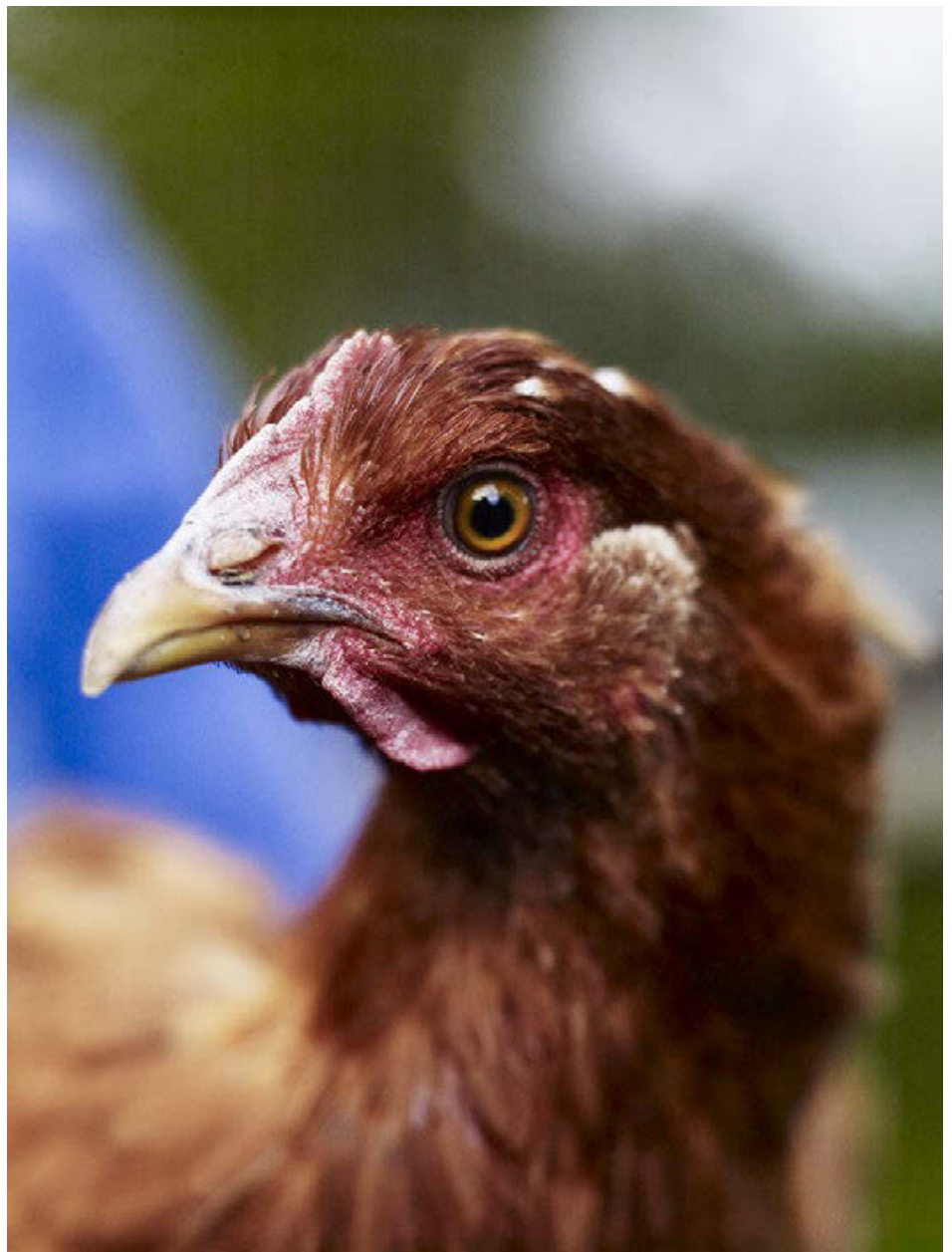
SMALLHOLDING



IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE word got out and the eggs for sale on our porch disappeared as quickly as we could replace them. They were being snapped up by friendly dog-walkers who use the footpath by our house and had heard about their rich, orange yolks and thick whites. We value them just as highly; boil or poach one of these freshly laid beauties to enjoy with buttered toast for breakfast and it will leave you feeling thoroughly spoilt – after that, even the best shop-bought kind simply won't do.

Hens were the first among our livestock to arrive – they're generally considered to be entry-level animals for smallholders. For us, it all started in 2006, a year after moving to Walnuts Farm, with half a dozen standard brown birds that had, until recently, been free-ranging in the garden of a pub that was closing down. We then bought a second-hand coop, which we saw advertised in the window of a local pet shop, scrubbed it thoroughly with disinfectant, gave it a coat of non-toxic paint, staked out 150 square metres of our front meadow with some electric green poultry netting to keep out predators and introduced the girls to their new home. Soon, we found out just how easy it is to raise a few chickens and it fuelled our enthusiasm to increase the flock.

We've learned that hens produce the best-tasting eggs when they've access to plenty of grass, which they peck and scratch at to find insects – an activity that is, for some reason, deeply soothing to watch. We move them around the front meadow so they aren't kept in the same area, which – due to chickens' methodical grazing – soon becomes bare. Of course, not having a fixed run has its disadvantages in that the hens are more vulnerable to predation by foxes during daylight hours due to the fact the fence isn't dug beneath the soil, allowing foxes to burrow under. It is also lower, so easily leapt over. Luckily, though, such raids are rare because the scent and continuous outdoor



WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN BUYING A BIRD

Bright eyes, glossy feathers, smooth legs, a clean vent and a red wattle and comb are all indicators of good hen health. Visit a local breeder (look through the classified ads of your area's newspaper or ask at an agricultural store) and go into the sheds with them to select your young birds or chicks to check they are being kept in clean and comfortable conditions. If you are taking on ex-commercial laying hens, they may appear to be out of condition and have bare patches of plumage. However, their appearance will improve after a few weeks of free-ranging. In order to ensure you are re-homing genuine formerly caged birds, source them through The British Hen Welfare Trust (bhwt.org.uk), which has collection points across the country and asks for a small donation to fund its work.



GETTING STARTED IN HENKEEPING

There are a few points to consider when taking up your new hobby – make the time to plan your flock and its accommodation now to ensure an enjoyable introduction to smallholding

Before selecting your birds, buy or build your coop. There are some simple plans available (such as in the *Haynes Chicken Manual*) if you have the time and skills to make one. Secondhand houses are advertised on websites such as ebay.com, preloved.co.uk and uk.freecycle.org – but make sure you clean them thoroughly with a product such as Battles Poultry House Disinfectant and let them air before introducing your birds at dusk. If buying a ready-made henhouse, consider designs with an easily removable roof or high-enough one to allow you to enter and clean with ease.

It's wise to begin with a small flock – just ensure your housing is generous and has space for a few more birds should you wish

to expand the operation (use your judgment, as manufacturers' guidelines can be inadequate). When adding new birds in the future, try to introduce an equal number or at least pairs of hens to reduce the chances of bullying and, for the same reason, do it at dusk; by morning they have usually accepted them.

There is a wide range of different birds to choose from. Pure breeds include the fancier, more eye-catching varieties of fowl displayed at agricultural shows around the country. These events (asao.org.uk) offer a good opportunity to meet breeders. Alternatively, the Poultry Club of Great Britain lists contacts (poultryclub.org/poultry/breed-clubs). Their egg yields

are lower and many will stop laying between September or October and mid-February, but these birds are productive far longer than hybrids. Many breeds are also available in a bantam version, which are around half the size of their standard counterpart, tend to produce fewer, smaller eggs and are more flighty.

Hybrids are the result of crossing a cockerel and hen of different breeds. In their first year or two, they lay prolifically – up to 300 eggs a year. Many beginners choose to keep hybrids initially – a type developed for commercial laying – due to their docile nature and high egg yield. Mixed breeds are the offspring of hybrid parents. As such, they tend

to be one-offs that combine several different characteristics, with no two siblings the same.

Buying hens at point-of-lay (often abbreviated to POL) – when they are 16-21 weeks – means the young pullets have been sexed as hens and they are ready to produce eggs. The price per bird varies according to whether you are selecting hybrids (from around £10) or pure-breeds (up to £40).

It's worth checking the deeds of your property or tenancy agreement (especially in urban areas) to ensure there aren't covenants prohibiting hen-keeping. You needn't register with Defra (gov.uk/poultry-registration) unless you plan to keep 50 birds or more.

SMALLHOLDING



presence of our lurcher Bunny and whippet Blink tend to ward them off, but happen usually if we are away for a few days between Christmas and Easter when other food is scarce. Or perhaps a covering of snow can earth the electric fence, meaning a few hungry hunters are able to bite through, jump over or even crawl under the net to take their prey. At dusk, however, a daylight-sensitive automatic door-closing mechanism means that, even if we are not around or forget, as soon as light fades – when chickens naturally head in to roost – they're safe. Overall, we feel the flock's quality of life outweighs the risks, plus being free to roam an expanse of fresh pasture seems to keep them in good health, as the hens are less prone to pests and diseases.

Hybrids – a type developed commercially to offer improved egg yields – such as our first batch of hens, are friendly and reliable in the laying department, and we continue to include some from Wendy Turner at nearby Wish End Farm (thecosycoop.co.uk) in our flock. However, once we'd begun keeping hens, we also became tempted by all the different pure breeds available such as the chestnut-feathered Welsummer, the large, fluffy Orpingtons and the Silver-laced Wyandotte with its elegant black-and-white plumage. And it's not only the appearance of the bird itself that counts, but the colour of the eggshells they produce – Cotswold

Legbars are prized for their beautiful eau-de-nil or pale-blue shade, while the Marans' are a dark brown. Poultry-club auctions and sales have proved to be an inexpensive way to acquire these special birds, but we also enjoy raising our own chicks. You can buy fertile eggs by post and, either with an incubator or a reliably broody hen, hatch them out. Our Cuckoo Marans tend to become broody twice a year and make very good mothers. A tell-tale sign is when they start sitting in the nestbox all day and return to it as soon as you've thrown them out. Then you know it's time to transfer them to a separate house, where they can warm and turn a clutch of up to a dozen fertile eggs in peace. In fact, they'll even raise other types of fowl as long as the eggs aren't too large or small – very sweetly, ducklings follow their hen 'mother' around, even when they're old enough to tower over her. All our birds graze together in a mixed flock and new ones are always introduced at night when the others are asleep. We also keep guinea fowl, quail, Aylesbury ducks, geese and a lone turkey who joins any group that will have him and roosts on the tin roof of the chicken coop – every evening we hear it clatter under his feet. It's one ritual that marks the end of our smallholding day, but still nothing quite beats collecting warm eggs from the nesting box.

i *Next month: keeping pigs.*

WHAT TO DO IN THE KITCHEN GARDEN THIS MONTH

- Earth up early potatoes
- Harvest tender young spinach leaves to eat raw in salads
- Hoe the beds to prevent weeds competing with germinating vegetables
- Sow more seeds for a staggered supply of salad crops
- Stake broad bean plants to prevent them bending in the wind



Missed 'Starting the kitchen garden' in our April issue? Download it at countryliving.co.uk.

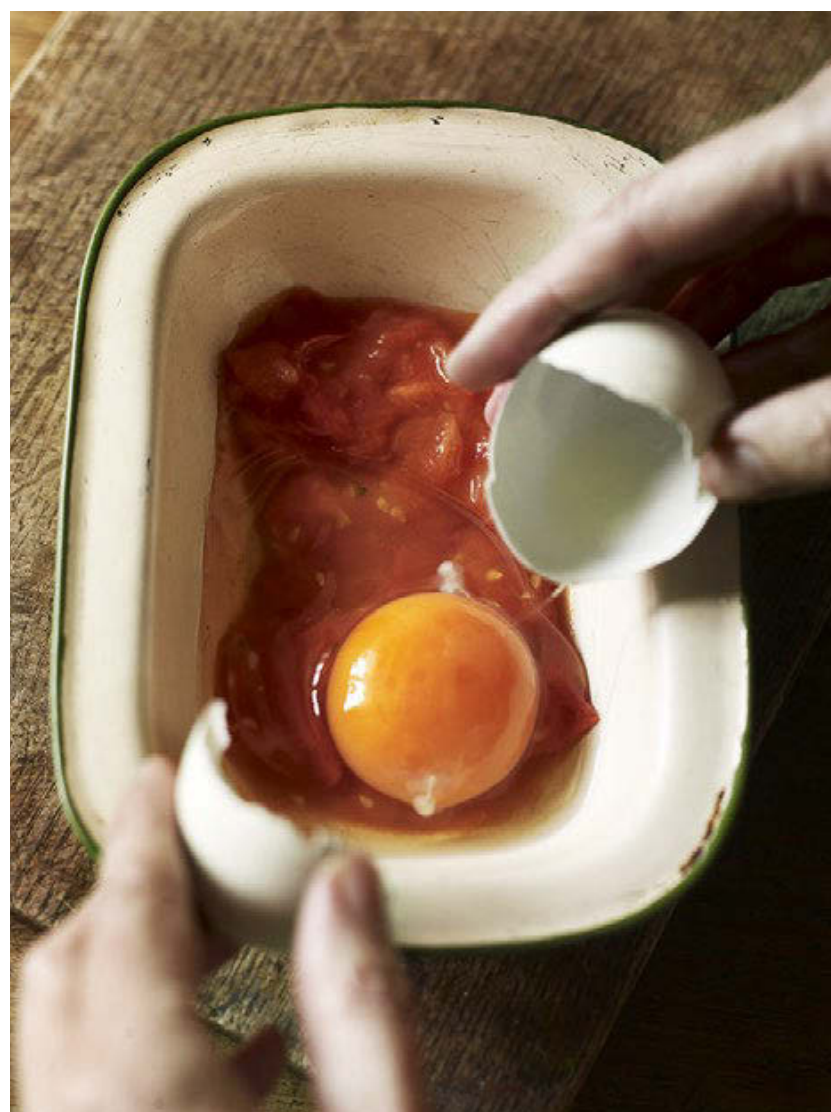
shop.countryliving.co.uk



CARING FOR YOUR FLOCK

- **Although chickens aren't time-consuming to look after, you will need to check them every morning and evening.** It takes just 20-30 minutes each day. In the morning, ideally when it's light, open up the pop-hole to let them out, refresh their drinkers and top up feed, while checking they all look healthy and are moving about happily. As well as layers' pellets and mixed corn, you should supply your hens with oyster shell (see p59) and grit (with which they grind solid food).
- **Supplement your hens' diet with vegetables or fruits from the garden** (check a chicken-keeping guide as some, including rhubarb, are poisonous) – except those with a strong flavour such as onion as it can taint the eggs – and feed them mixed corn in the afternoon for a treat (once they've had a good portion of their more nutritious layers' pellets). As soon after dusk as possible, shut up the pop-hole and put their food away securely so it doesn't attract rodents, and collect eggs from the nesting box.
- **There are other jobs that will require more commitment on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis.** Worming your hens will ensure a healthy digestive system – you can buy feed ready mixed with conventional treatment Flubenvet (marriagesmillers.co.uk). Alternatively, regular use of a herb-based kind, such as widely available Verm-X for Poultry, Ducks & Fowl in solid or liquid form, is effective in treating internal parasites.
- **In spring and summer, the pest red mite can take up residence in poultry housing.** There are a number of products that reduce or eliminate it, however. Diatom is an all-natural kind made from ground-up fossils and, dusted over the surfaces inside, will eradicate the parasite, while Barrier Red Mite Powder contains plant oils and is suitable for use on the birds as well.
- **Scaly leg is also caused by a mite** that burrows under the scales of a chicken's leg and raises them so it has a rough surface. When the hens are docile after dusk, immerse their legs in surgical spirit, then seal them with petroleum jelly.
- **All these complaints can be kept to a minimum** by good husbandry and, where possible, giving chickens access to fresh ground. Don't be alarmed if your hens begin to lose their feathers and go off lay – it is likely that they are starting their annual moult, during which their entire plumage is replaced. It usually takes three to four weeks and requires a large amount of energy, so there is often a decline in general appearance.
- **As well as keeping on top of pest control, check the perimeter fence** on a regular basis for holes through which predators could enter. Keep housing well-maintained, as draughts and leaks can be detrimental to health, but ensure there is good ventilation in the house at roof level to prevent respiratory ailments. ➔

HOW-TO VIDEOS
WATCH OUR GUIDE TO BAKING EGGS AT
COUNTRYLIVING.CO.UK/WALNUTS-FARM



HOW TO... BAKE EGGS

This simple supper dish is incredibly tasty and the perfect way to use a surplus of newly laid eggs. Soft, fresh chorizo needs to be cooked before eating but if you have only an air-dried variety in your larder, omit the initial cooking time and add it during step 4 instead

Preparation 5 minutes

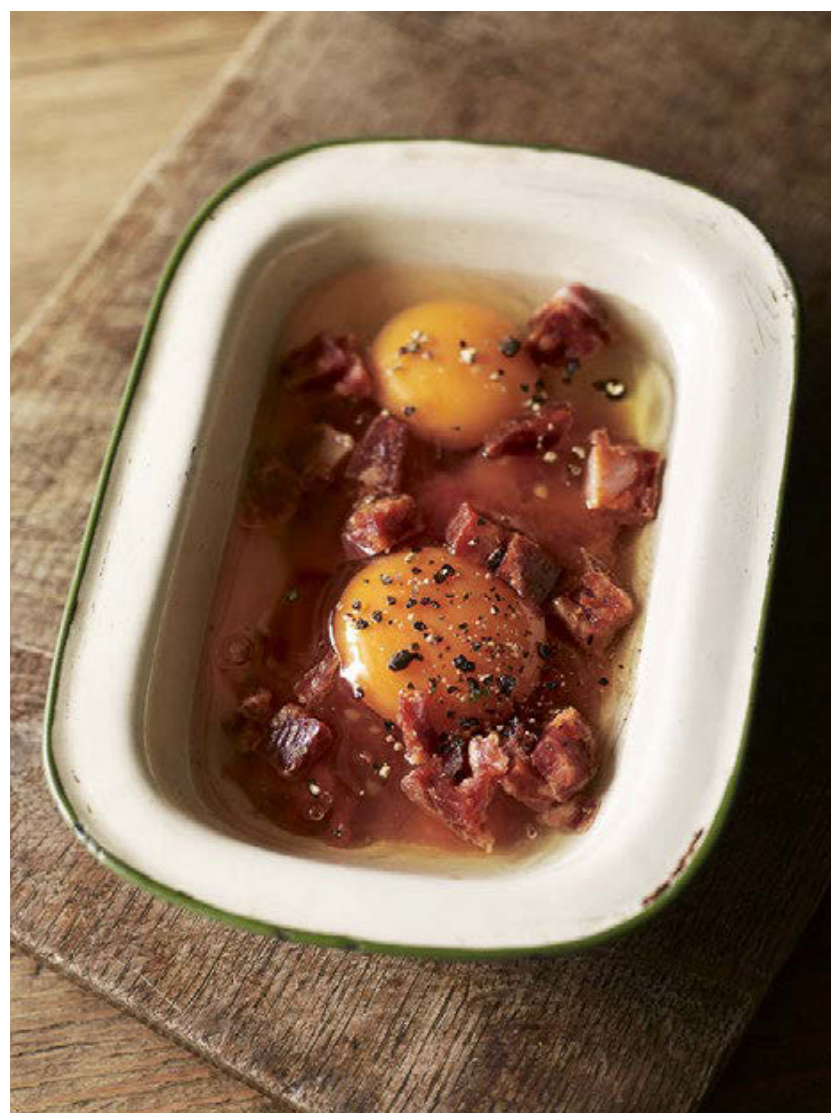
Cooking 30 minutes **Serves** 4

1 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for greasing
150g cooking chorizo, diced
4 large ripe tomatoes, roughly chopped
8 medium eggs
1 tbsp freshly chopped parsley (optional)

- ① Heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan oven) gas mark 4. Grease four 200ml shallow ovenproof dishes, such as those shown.
- ② Heat the oil in a small pan and gently fry the chorizo for a couple of minutes until

it is golden. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside.

- ③ Put the tomatoes in the pan and cook for about 8-10 minutes until softened and slightly thickened and broken down. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. (In winter, replace with a 225g tin of plum tomatoes.)
- ④ Spread the tomato mixture on the base of each dish. Break two eggs into each one and sprinkle with the chorizo. Bake for 15-20 minutes – the yolks should still be soft and the whites just set. Sprinkle with parsley and serve with plenty of crusty bread. ➔





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SMALLHOLDING

THIS PICTURE

Perfect for brunch or an easy supper, baked eggs offer plenty of flavour for relatively little effort. Bacon can be substituted for the chorizo in the recipe on the previous page and works just as well. 

 *Next month:*
curing bacon



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WORDS BY EMMA PRITCHARD • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALUN CALLENDER



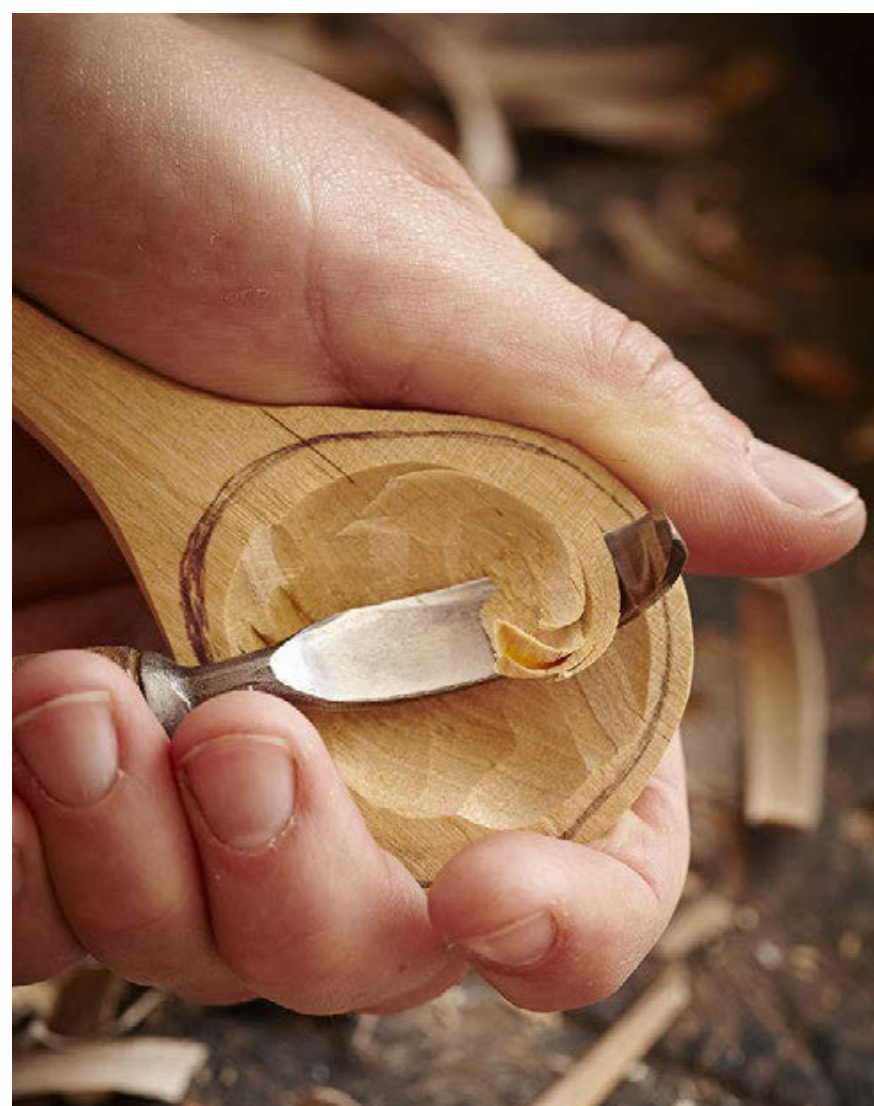
It's a wonderfully warm spring day in a patch of woodland near Frome in Somerset. Overhead, a breeze rushes through the leaves of oak, ash and beech trees; chiffchaffs and tits dart and sing between branches; and a sweet-smelling blanket of bluebells softens the root-covered floor. A ray of sunlight shines through the canopy and catches on something silver, then, amid the sounds of the forest, comes the unmistakable crack of an axe through wood.

"Welcome to my office," says EJ Osborne, maker of hand-carved wooden spoons and founder of Hatchet & Bear. She carefully lays down the chopper and picks up one half of the log she's split in two, inspecting its unique grain of browns and golds with a twinkle in her eye: "Trees are incredible. As they grow, they create this beautiful material. I just shape that into something useful – they do the hard work, not me."

EJ adds the specimen to an already handsome collection of windfall pieces in a bag at her feet, which she is able to take, thanks to an agreement with the woodland owner. On some sunny mornings she will stay in the woods to continue her work, sitting on a tree stump, her white Staffordshire bull terrier Polo at her feet and surrounded by potato-like peelings of wood – but today, she has a big order to fulfil. Since launching Hatchet & Bear two years ago, EJ has gained a level of recognition for her humble wooden spoons that she

THIS PAGE EJ uses storm-felled wood to create her pleasingly traditional spoons – her coffee scoops come

from a 400-year-old walnut tree; she doesn't use sandpaper: "I don't want to remove the maker's marks"



CRAFT

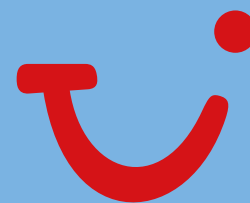
finds hard to believe. "I started off making ten a week and selling them at the local market," she says. "Now I'm producing 50 in the same amount of time and have been approached by high-street retailers who want to stock my pieces."

Back in the front room-cum-workshop of her terraced house in Frome, EJ selects her wood – primarily walnut, sycamore, field maple and cherry, although she will use any deciduous hardwood she can find. "Most storm damage happens to older trees, which have the most interesting grains," she explains. The only requisite for EJ is that the wood be green, or freshly harvested, and therefore higher in moisture content, so softer and easier to shape. She uses an axe, a straight-edged knife and a crook knife: first, removing excess wood around a template marked onto a split branch or log; next, refining the shape with a sharp blade; and, finally, scooping out the bowl in four confident strokes. There is no filing or sanding as she believes you get a smoother finish with a knife. Each piece is then left to dry and harden for a couple of days before being rubbed with linseed oil and beeswax to protect the wood and bring out the natural shades. What once took her a day to make, EJ can now do in half an hour.

Naturally creative and with a lifelong love of trees – she studied arboriculture and, later, product design at university – it wasn't until EJ relocated to Frome from London in 2012 that she tried carving. "I became aware of the large swathes of woodland here while walking my dog. Then I caught flu and, in a feverish state, had the idea to make a spoon. I don't know where it came from. So I grabbed a Stanley knife and started to whittle. I was so excited – I knew I'd found the craft for me," she says. She spent a day with renowned expert Robin Wood, mastering the basics, then returned home to practise on her own: "It felt natural. I was empowered. I knew I didn't want to turn out unnecessary items; the spoon is the ultimate utility tool. Before the Romans, everyone ate with wooden spoons and bowls, which they'd carry with them. There's nothing quite like eating from this natural material."

For 12 months, she perfected her first collection – eating spoons with slung sides. With a strong neck and deep bowl, inspired by the design of ships' keels and medieval artefacts, they are made to last. She worked primarily at night, when ➔

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World of  TUI



THIS PAGE EJ in her front room-cum-workshop – her handmade products, including scorched

chopping boards – are stocked by independent stores. Her next project will be a spoon-carving kit

her daughter Orla, now four, was asleep, learning where and in which direction to cut, and how much wood to remove: “I’d whittle into the early hours by the fire. It was like an addiction.”

Grain spoons, coffee scoops and stirrers joined her initial creation, then spatulas, jar spoons and rehandled vegetable peelers. Last year, she introduced chopping boards scorched with a blowtorch – “I call it embellishment with fire” – and Viking beard combs, a collaboration with First Olympian beard oils. EJ also began running spoon-making workshops to share the process, from tree identification to harvesting and carving.

The shaping done, EJ picks up her crook knife and presses it against the head of a soon-to-be-spoon. A crunching sound becomes louder as she carves deeper into the wood. She runs a finger over the gentle undulations of the spoon’s bowl and places it with the other finished items, then turns her attention to some that have dried and hardened. Using a heated, flat-headed poker, she gives the piece its finishing touch: marking the wood with the distinctive geometric Hatchet & Bear logo.

Polo gets up from the floor and nuzzles EJ’s side. It’s time to go. She’s had a call from a man with a 100-year-old cherry tree that’s being chopped down. “People often ring when they have wood they need shifting,” she says. “I’m happy to oblige. After all, their waste timber is my livelihood.” And with that, she’s off out again, hatchet in hand and a spring in her step.

i Hatchet & Bear (hatchetandbear.co.uk). Country Living readers will receive a ten per cent discount on orders placed by 31 May 2015 when they quote SPOON100.



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*d*esigned to work brilliantly with the latest look for rustic interiors, this fashionable sofa encapsulates the perfect mix of contemporary style and traditional manufacturing. The CL team worked alongside the designers from DFS to produce our Gower model in a classic leather. Upholstered in the UK, the sofa is available in Walnut (above), a classic briefcase tan; Oak, a medium-brown option; and almost black Ebony, and comes in three sizes: grand, shown here (£1,899), large (£1,699) and medium (£1,599). There is also a matching armchair (£1,199). Aside from offering great durability and a timeless look that will get better with age, the leather has subtle variations to give a vintage look. To view the complete range and find your nearest stockist, go to dfs.co.uk/countryliving.

ABOVE, FROM LEFT Shoreditch lamp, £235, Garden Trading. **Stool**, £48, Grand Illusions. **Throw**, £119, Lexington. **Cushions**, from left: Gower cushion in wine plaid, £69, DFS; Marden (L-204) cotton, £96, Fermeoie; Ronas (LF690FR) wool, £59/m, Linwood; Baya ochre linen, £84/m, Rapture & Wright; Bramble

(224462) linen, £55/m, Morris & Co. **Ladder**, £54.95, Grand Illusions. **Alpha chest**, £995, Graham & Green. **Tin, jug and truck**, from a selection, Baileys. **Fern and cup and saucer with helxine**, from a selection, Wild at Heart. **Bermondsey lamp**, £100, Garden Trading. **Antique print**, from a selection, Etsy. **Oval**

mirror, £67.99, Grand Illusions. **Cooper Red jute rug**, £339, Dash & Albert. **Coralie coffee table**, £195, Habitat. **Tablecloth** in Bramble linen, £55/m, Morris & Co. **Wooden tray**, £10.80, Grand Illusions. **Teapot**, ebay find. **Isola jug**, £20, Anthropologie. **Mugs**, from £15, Love it Want it Buy It. *For stockists, see Where to Buy*

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALUN CALLENDER. STYLING BY BEN KENDRICK

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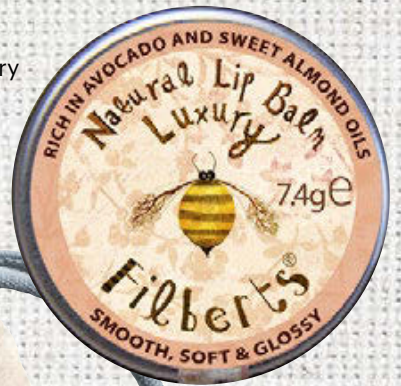
Painted pig made from reclaimed wood, £16.95, Handcrafted Wood

Rifle Paper Co botanical journal, £12.95, Northlight



Staffa Murano pink cashmere and silk scarf, £185, Begg & Co

Natural luxury lip balm, £3.95, Filberts of Dorset

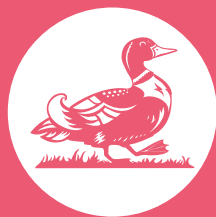


Wild Hare patterned oilcloth handbag, £59, Susie Faulks



Hand-crafted leather dog collars, from £58.50, Mutts & Hounds

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Away from it all



From a romantic gypsy wagon to a jaunty 1950s caravan, these rustic retreats on wheels provide characterful spaces far from the madding crowd

PRODUCED BY BEN KENDRICK



The 1950s caravan

For their business, Snail Trail, Steven and Lucy Lord renovate, restore and sell VW campervans, but their own retreat of choice lies at the bottom of their garden in Bedfordshire. In a quiet corner, tucked behind hedges, Constance, a jauntily styled Sprite 14 caravan (made in 1957), in apple green and cream, sits on her own deck, with views across open countryside.

Inside, the couple have restored and decorated the van with a combination of vintage pieces and retro-styled current favourites from Cath Kidston and Greengate. The jolly combination of red and white linoleum flooring, floral fabrics and brightly coloured china and accessories evoke the era of optimism of Constance's heyday. Complete with games, deckchairs and colourful

bunting, the van has an aura of fun and escapism, like an idealised child's holiday. The interior is cleverly designed with lots of dual-purpose fixtures and every inch of room maximised. The large table, which seats up to eight people, can be easily removed; the space then converts into a pair of double (or three single) beds. At the other end is a compact kitchen with tiny cooker, lots of cupboards for storage and a sink.

"The van has been a great den for our daughters Rosie and Phoebe to play in," Lucy says. "But it is also a lovely peaceful spot to escape the world, unwind and put your feet up with a cup of tea."

i *Snail Trail (01767 600440; snailtrail.co.uk). Constance is available to hire for photoshoots.*

THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE Situated at the bottom of the Lords' garden, the van is sited on a deck made from railway sleepers, which creates an area to sit out on in warm weather. Inside, vibrant colours and assorted floral and patterned fabrics mix with blankets crocheted in granny squares



THIS PAGE Gilly's hut is furnished simply and organically, with pieces sourced mostly from junk shops and antiques fairs. Walls are painted in Farrow & Ball's Clunch, and the futons were made by Dojo Ecoshop, covered by a blanket brought back from Rajasthan. She commissioned the stove from Devon blacksmiths Windy Smithy

The shepherd's hut

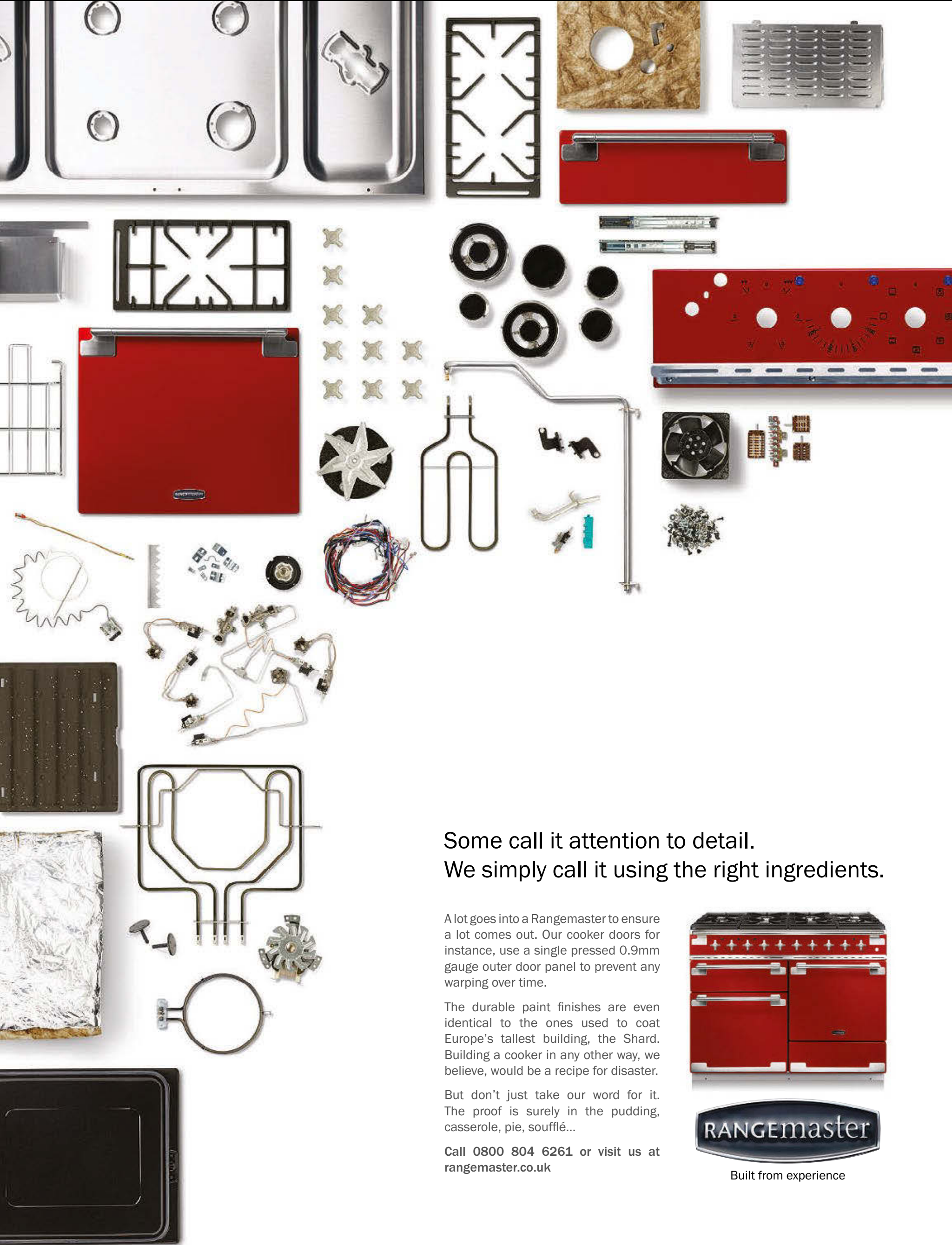
With its rustic interior, Gilly Wyatt Smith's shepherd's hut is a calm place that offers a welcome escape from modern life. Gilly, owner of The Yew Tree Gallery in Morvah, west Cornwall, bought it in 2008 to be an occasional retreat for herself and friends, but it has been admired so much, she is considering offering it for glamping holidays.

Newly made to a traditional design, the hut has classic iron wheels, tongue-and-groove walls and a curved roof. Gilly positioned it carefully in the corner of a field near the gallery, where it enjoys uninterrupted views of sea and moorland, lined it with insulation and fitted a small steel stove from a Devon blacksmith to warm the space on chilly days. "As it's in an extremely windy, exposed

spot, I also made sure it was anchored down securely with guy ropes," she says.

Inside, the aim was to be practical and minimal. After painting the walls off-white, Gilly had a bed made by a local carpenter, topped it with organic futons, then added the barest of necessities: a row of folding hooks, a shelf, a mirror, a vintage dresser base, a small pine table and bentwood chair, wind-up lamps and candlesticks. The finishing touches were a hemp cushion cover and table runner, a Rajasthani blanket, made-to-measure blinds and three simple linocuts hung on the walls. The result is basic yet beautiful, just as Gilly wanted: "As soon as you step inside, there is a sense of peace and comfort. It has an extraordinary effect on one's spirits." ➔

WORDS BY KATHARINE SORRELL. PHOTOGRAPHS BY RACHEL WHITING



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Built from experience



THIS PAGE Anna's bus has been decorated with reclaimed fixtures and fittings, including bunk beds, cupboards and a woodburning stove. The wallpaper is original William Morris, while the fabrics were brought back from travels in Morocco. The painting on the outside of the vehicle was inspired by an Arthur Rackham illustration found in an Edwardian children's book

The hippie bus

This former school bus was owned by a couple of artists from Devon who travelled around the world in it before Anna Bingham took it on as a restoration project. She had spent several years restoring classic caravans and even ran a campsite full of them. Quirky, kitsch and somewhat unconventional, Love Lane Caravans, on Cornwall's Lizard Peninsula, was a hit with glampers and vintage-lovers alike. "The bus had been standing in a field for years and was in a sorry state," Anna explains. "It had mechanical problems, every corner was bashed and the inside was bare, with rudimentary carpentry. But it had such character."

Having sorted out the mechanics and bodywork, Anna and her partner, Dan Mullaly, commissioned a carpenter to build the beds, sink and seating, and two artist friends painted the outside, loosely based on an

illustration by Arthur Rackham. The interior was inspired by a recent trip to Morocco and Anna's love of the Arts and Crafts period. She then scoured reclamation yards and auctions for the fixtures and fittings. To suit the style, eiderdowns, books and crockery were sourced from antiques and junk shops.

As time went on, renovation projects became the focus of Anna and Dan's business. "We decided to focus solely on applying our knowledge and skill to a small range of vintage caravans, starting with scaled-down tin tabernacles," Anna explains. "There is enormous scope to personalise them. It's like doll's houses for grown-ups!"

i To see the collection, visit lovelane-caravans.com. ➔

WORDS BY KATHARINE SORRELL. PHOTOGRAPHS BY RACHEL WHITING

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THIS PAGE Carving is the usual form of decoration on these wagons and provides the visual signature of the creator; the main bed is at a raised mezzanine height in the traditional style, so it can be pulled out on an alternating wooden strut base to become a double bed when needed

The gypsy wagon

For folk singer Katus Young, Barney Maurice and their young son, Madog, the simpler life has also become their business. The couple run a small holiday company in Cumbria, renting out horse-drawn wagons to city folk who want to spend a few days meandering along country roads and lanes.

When Barney was a boy in Kendal, his mother used to take him to visit a tinker who had a wagon that enthralled him. At 16, he left home to work in a circus; some travelling followed, which led him to the Isle of Arran, where he set up a pony-trekking centre. This inspired him to buy a horse and an old traveller's wagon; it was the start of a new career.

Barney combined different style elements to create this unique design, using ideas from many sources, including a photograph of his grandfather

with a Brush wagon (so-called as it was used by brush salesmen). He added a door on one side and a mollycroft roof (skylight). The chassis is an original one, about 100 years old. Starting with the floor, the wagon was built up one step at a time. The basic frame was made from pine, creating the "ribs", and then the roof was constructed. Once the shape was correct, Barney set about carving the decorations.

The couple are preparing to live out their dream of taking a year out in France in the wagon. It will even have its own stage, so Katus can perform her songs. Thanks to Barney's vision, this is a small but beautiful space in which to live, work and play.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY SEB CHANDLER



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In our series celebrating home-grown skills, we meet women making the most of their hobby, whether they're earning from their kitchen table or launching a fully fledged business. Plus, you can discover different ways to follow in their footsteps

WORDS BY KITTY CORRIGAN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALUN CALLENDER

THIS MONTH: THE COLLECTOR





At the age of 14, Hannah Burson was taken out of school one afternoon by her mother to experience the thrill of the chase at auction, where she started bidding for light fittings and vintage furniture. It was the beginning of a lifelong passion for collecting. So in 2012 when she moved with three young children from a large house to a small cottage just outside Hay-on-Wye following her divorce, she needed to de-clutter and make money from the myriad items she had amassed over the years – opening a vintage store in the Welsh book town proved the perfect solution.

The fascinating emporium comprises seemingly random objects that work together as an artistic whole. Red ice-skates in a Victorian glass cabinet sit next to sheet music from the Forties that rests on an architect's plan chest, while a retro orange TV set looks homely on a Formica coffee table and a heavy-duty bicycle leans against a battered wooden dresser displaying WWII helmets, model cars and framed book covers. "I've never been able to resist a bargain," Hannah says, pointing to one of her favourite acquisitions hanging inside the door: an enormous chandelier found in a barn and bought as part of a pair for £10. Lighting is an obsession: old coloured bulbs, brass and nickel lampholders and large industrial shades fill the store.

The shop building was originally a large hotel and just before the Hay Festival last year, when tens of thousands of people descended for ten days of literary events, the ground floor became available for rent. Others might have been daunted by the shabby state of the interior, but Hannah saw the potential of large open spaces, alcoves and ante-rooms, and set to work with her friend and like-minded entrepreneur Lucy Jardine, scrubbing and painting for four days round the clock to open in time for the deluge. "We made enough money during the festival to see us through the winter months," she recalls.

Hannah knows about hard work: she got her first job at 17 as a horse groom and children's nanny in Cornwall and later trained as a business agent in the home counties when she learned how to sell. She settled in Hay-on-Wye so Silas, seven, and Griffin, five, could go to school, and ran her own photography company, then – while caring for Gwyneth,

THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE
Hannah saw the potential of
the old hotel building (above

left) and transformed it into
an attractive and popular
emporium and café

three – tried out the idea of selling vintage items at a pop-up store in the old South Wales Electricity building, which people referred to as 'the old electric shop', so she kept the name when she moved to the new premises: "I only had a few hundred pounds to start with and often juggled with the rent money to buy something I felt I 'had to have', then scrambled to sell another piece fast. Not recommended!"

To cover the lease on the property, she offered concessions to other small enterprises, including Llynfi Textiles, which sells Welsh woollen clothing, Katie Tyler's upholstery services and Barnabees Books, which specialises in classic Penguins and Ladybirds. There is also a good-as-new designer clothes section run by Lucy, who has just become Hannah's business partner and whose eldest child, Bluebelle, 20, handles the accounts and admin. Each section happens to be run by a woman, with 17 children between them, many of whom enjoy their turn on the one item in the shop not for sale – a rocking horse made by Hannah's



“I wanted it to be a creative arts area where people would linger, and possibly buy”

grandfather. This arrangement helps the entrepreneurs with their many commitments, as they sell stock on each other's behalf if needed: “Everyone contributes their individual talent, and working together gives us a chance to build up online sales. There's a real sense of community whereas when operating alone you can sometimes doubt yourself.”

By collaborating with other enterprises, Hannah has made The Old Electric Shop a destination in itself. “I wanted it to be a creative arts area, where people would linger over a coffee or lunch, and possibly buy,” she says. The recent addition of a café has achieved this result. Gwen Goddard produces seasonal soups, stews, pizzas, salads and homemade cakes, while regular cocktail evenings attract custom and create a buzz. A huge oak bench is the setting for Speed Chess on Sunday afternoons, there is a gallery space for temporary exhibitions, and Wednesdays in term time sees illustrator Lizzie Harper running a children's workshop.

Being part of a team also allows Hannah to go out seeking eccentric and vintage items from scrap merchants, salvage yards, auctions, car boot sales and dealers: “There are some great characters in the Welsh

SMALL BUSINESS START-UP



A VINTAGE STORE

Words by Fiona Davies of WiRE

Whether your passion is for retro, revival, curios or antiques, the business of collecting is big and there is plenty of room for new enterprises.

SET OUT YOUR STORE

- Test the water by selling on the internet or at a market. If you opt for the online route, invest time in learning how to take good photographs and present a product.
- Niche shops don't need to be on the high street. Once you have a good reputation, people will find you regardless of your location, but initially you will need to invest in extra marketing and PR.
- To make it easy for your customers to buy, consider a range of room themes. Haphazard arrangements can be confusing and may lead to fewer sales.
- Make your terms and conditions clear. Customers should be aware that they are buying items 'sold as seen', but this can be turned into a positive message about your stock's unique character and authenticity.

FIND AND KEEP CUSTOMERS

- Don't miss the chance to sell to all potential buyers. Offer a good mixture of products that will fit in different types of homes or wardrobes. Scatter around smaller, cheaper items (vintage buttons, fabric, kitchen utensils).
- Customer satisfaction is just as important with vintage items as it is with new – a second-hand supermarket carrier bag is not going to enhance the buying experience. Your packaging should be branded appropriately (a stamped brown paper bag, maybe) and convey the idea that you offer a reliable delivery service for larger items.

DRUM UP BUSINESS

- If trade is slow, organise events. Perhaps a retro fashion evening with out-of-hours browsing, a clear-out-your-attic day, or an expert talk on film memorabilia or vinyl.
- Regularly audit your stock – anything sitting around for too long will cost you money. A hidden item may suddenly be in vogue and could need re-pricing or relocating.

SOURCEBOOK

- National Market Traders Federation: resources and training for retailers and market traders (nmtf.co.uk)
- Vintage Business: online resources for vintage traders (vintagebusiness.co.uk)
- Vintage Fairs: venues and events across the UK (judysvintagefair.co.uk; britaindoesvintage.co.uk)



“I only collect for the shop these days – I can’t resist pieces with an industrial history”

hills.” The most unusual item she has bought recently is a prosthetic arm with leather strapping, which she had no trouble selling. “I don’t collect anything for me these days, just for the shop, and what I can’t resist are pieces with an industrial or commercial history such as old shop fittings and factory furniture,” she says, as she unveils the goods she found on her recent trip to Birmingham, which include a factory clock, a hairdresser’s mirror and a bench that once belonged to a railway station. Sizing them up, she decides where each will fit in her fascinating emporium, not that they are likely to be there for long – soon they’ll be bringing a quirky touch and an interesting back story to the homes of her increasingly devoted customers.

i *The Old Electric Shop, 10 Broad Street, Hay-on-Wye, Herefordshire (01497 821194; oldelectric.co.uk). Open during Hay Festival 2015, 21-31 May, with cocktails every night.*

Inspired to set up your own business? Turn the page for our insider guide by our Talent Ambassador.

MORE WAYS TO TURN A COLLECTING TALENT INTO TURNOVER



RUN A MOBILE SHOP

Last year Clare Bridge decided to close her store selling vintage clothing from the 1920s to the 1980s due to a feeling that the shop had run its course. For eight years, Second Hand Rose in Worcester had been the focus of her working life. But today, travelling to fairs and exhibitions around the country with her mobile emporium, which is also online, means her ever-growing collection has reached new buyers: “I’m not tied to one place, and it also enables me to offer a sourcing service, to help people looking for unusual items.” She has had time to expand her website, use Facebook, Pinterest, blogging and Twitter to the full and co-author a book with Jo Waterhouse called *Wearable Vintage Fashion*. Clare will be at the Festival of Vintage, York Racecourse, every month throughout the year and at the Malvern Flea & Collectors Fair (next date 25 May). *Second Hand Rose* (07887 732684; secondhandroseworcester.co.uk).



RESTORE AND RE-SELL

Based in East Sussex, the husband-and-wife team behind JSB Vintage scour neglected farm buildings and garden sheds in the south-east to unearth dressers, cupboards, tallboys and even statues, in need of some TLC. Julian Bennett grew up working for his family’s antiques business, and shares an interest in such finds for the home and garden with his wife Sue. “We specialise in vintage and antique French and English furniture, but also sell silver and glassware,” Sue says. With careful repair and several coats of heritage paint (the shade French Grey is a favourite), the pieces are ready for a new owner to use and display. *JSB Vintage* (07879 406843; jsbvintage@hotmail.com). ➔

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Learn to earn *with* Julie Dodsworth

THIS MONTH: LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

IN THE EARLY STAGES OF YOUR BUSINESS you will consider growing, gathering more customers and, possibly, taking on a premises. You may already employ a part-time member of staff or be working with someone else and sharing the load. This is a great time to define your brand: work to your strengths, outline your core values and perfect the image you wish to portray.

During my former career in floristry, it was the bosses who kept me inspired and involved that got the best from me. If you have employees, trusting them and treating them as you would wish to be treated can only serve you well. Encourage everyone to see themselves as a team; they will then grow with you and the fledgling business. Being there from the beginning will mean that you have a special history together.

Sharing the workload with others isn't always

easy. You most certainly don't want a problem shared to be a problem doubled because you never agree. Delineation is the answer. It has been the cornerstone of my partnership with my husband Simon for many years. Draw up a list of each other's strengths and from there agree ultimate responsibility for those jobs to be divided between you. It is a very efficient way to work when your time is precious; you needn't discuss every single point of action that must be carried out.

Being able to delegate will help your business to grow. If you believe that only you can do a certain task well, you will own a job and a business that will struggle to move forward – it may have little value in the years ahead and your skill could retire with you. From an artist's perspective, apprenticeship-style training is impossible

to put in place, of course. No one can paint exactly like you, for example. However, I have learned to delegate as much as possible of the enterprise's aspects that are not to do with the artistic side. My homeware business has many different facets, and a good team around the core product is still essential.

JULIE DODSWORTH, our Talent Ambassador, is an artisan British designer who works from her narrowboat on the Grand Union Canal in Northamptonshire. At the age of 50, she decided to turn her painting hobby into a range of licensed homeware. In this column, Julie shares her experience and some of the great advice she has been given by others along the way.

Finding the right premises may be exciting, mind-boggling and fraught all at once.

A successful shopkeeper I've known for many years looked for the busy side of the street, a good footfall and the right local demographic for her business. A building and location can seem perfect but you may not be able to sell your favourite product to the town residents. Or you've found what you want to sell but where it would sell well may not suit you. Aligning these elements and having a 'gut feeling' is the magic formula, according to my experienced friend.

Building trust with suppliers will be key to your

success. Pay your bills as quickly as possible and pick your moment if you need to make a complaint. People who enjoy working with you will help you in more ways than just supplying a product to buy.

They will take time on the phone with you, help you with offers and may be able to fast-track the occasional order. As you journey along in your business, you may meet others who don't treat you well such as a company that seems to let you down or a customer who complains unfairly. You may be baffled by the poor behaviour of others in business – but don't lose heart. Stick to your own good ethics, set the moral bar high and continue to demonstrate honesty, trust and care. 🍷

NEXT MONTH: Demystifying the business plan

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALUN CALLENDER



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WILD ABOUT THE DORMOUSE

Discover how a man with no background in conservation has become devoted to this endangered small mammal, inspiring an army of fellow volunteers eager to glean his expert knowledge

WORDS BY KITTY CORRIGAN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY NOEL MURPHY



THIS PAGE Paul in Little Linford Wood – dormice houses have their own building regulations. If the wood is too thick, it will muffle the sound of enemies approaching, too thin and it will be damaged by wind and rain; the entrance hole is at the back, to deter birds and squirrels

“I didn’t go looking for dormice,” Paul Manchester says. “Dormice found me.” An electronics engineer by day, Paul spends his evenings and weekends in the woods seeking out his favourite mammal, or foraging for food favoured by the captive-bred specimens who live in spacious, custom-built cages in his back garden. His interest in the diminutive creatures couldn’t have come at a better time. The once-widespread animals have become extinct across half their range in Britain in the past 100 years and it’s only thanks to the efforts of conservationists like Paul that, in recent years, this decline has begun to slow.

“I have always loved woodlands and wanted to get involved in conservation when I moved to Milton Keynes in 1998,” he says. “I thought it would also be a good way of meeting people, so I joined my local Wildlife Trust.” Paul is talking in hushed tones, his tall frame bent over a small wooden box attached to an oak tree shaded by spring growth in the canopy overhead. Cautiously, he lifts the lid to check if there is life inside. It’s box number 20 out of 28 in this part of Little Linford Wood in Buckinghamshire, and so far all have been either empty or requisitioned by woodmice. The species will evict dormice, and have even been known to kill those deep in hibernation before re-making the victim’s neatly woven nest into a teenager-style mess for themselves. Thankfully, this time the rightful owner is in residence. Paul

places the whole box inside a large bag, carefully removes the nest of dried leaves and gently cups his hand around the sleepy creature, which emerges, whiskers shivering and black eyes blinking in the sudden brightness. Holding it in an inelegant position to determine its sex, Paul then transfers the creature to a smaller bag to measure its weight with a hanging scale. Recently out of hibernation, the dormouse needs to pile on the grams, having lived off fat stored in its body for six months.

Six months is a long time to be dormant, which may have inspired the animal’s name, from the French ‘dormir’, meaning ‘to sleep’. Paul explains that the common dormouse is not actually a mouse at all, but from a different family of rodents due to many characteristics, most notably its furry rather than scaly tail, and the only native one that truly hibernates – when its body temperature drops to near that of its surroundings. If, in October, it doesn’t manage to fatten up enough before hibernation, or the winter is particularly harsh, it may not survive through to spring.

Walking through the forest with Paul and helping to record the vital statistics is a mixed group of young and old, who have given up their Sunday for the task. The rich habitat is a mix of hazel, birch, willow, ash, cherry and oak, supporting weasels, stoats, badgers and foxes. But it’s a shared love of the dormouse that has drawn the volunteers here today, eager to learn from Paul’s years of experience ➔

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THIS PAGE The dormice are monitored in their habitat after hibernation, when volunteers weigh them quickly (in a plastic bag for ease) and check their health

and gain their licence to 'disturb' and handle the protected species. "It took me a year to qualify, and now I very much enjoy training others," says Paul, who's one of only 693 licence holders in England. "It's essential to learn about the entire life-cycle from birth, at which stage they are called 'pinkies'." Instructed to keep as quiet as, well, a mouse, the children in the group can hardly contain squeals of delight at seeing such a rare British mammal up close. They 'ooh' and 'aah' at its sandy-coloured fur, cute rounded ears, stubby nose and miniature proportions – a length of 6cm-9cm and weight of just 15g-20g.

When it's first out and about, the dormouse at No 20 may well scamper up the tree to feast on spring blossom and young buds; this month and next, it will enjoy hawthorn, nectar and pollen from trees and shrubs; in summer, beetles, aphids and caterpillars are added to its diet, and in autumn, it fattens up for winter on hazelnuts while they are still green and slightly soft, blackberries, crab apples, damsons, grass and wild-flower seeds.

Although the dormouse population in the area experienced a huge boost with the successful re-establishment of 41 in 1998 – something that Paul attributes to his mentor and founder of the North Bucks Dormouse group John Prince – he is concerned by the low numbers found on his more recent forays. "It could be the result of wet, mild winters," he suggests. "Dormice need cold conditions to stay in hibernation. In a very mild winter, they wake up thinking it's spring and 80 per cent do not survive." A spate of floods doesn't help, because they hibernate on the ground, not in the boxes, and as they slumber among tree roots and in hollows, they are vulnerable to foxes and badgers.

Determined to improve matters, Paul is proud that his captive dormice produced several litters last summer. "I supply re-introduction schemes at a different site each June," he explains. "Others are kept for breeding stock or for educational purposes." They receive their five-a-day from Paul, who indulges them with apples, pears, grapes, cherries and seeds. One year he even installed infra-red cameras in their cages so he could watch their antics instead of television.

Not content with simply helping from his home, Paul has also become the proud owner of woodland in Lincolnshire, which he bought with the help of a legacy from his father. He now looks forward to weekends camping there while restoring it, in the hope that it will become a suitable habitat for dormice in the future – just one of the steps he's taking to ensure that this small but remarkable creature is around for many generations to come. 

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you know of a wood (with a willing landowner) where dormice could be re-introduced, contact the People's Trust for Endangered Species (ptes.org). It must be at least 50 acres in size, with a diverse mix of shrubs and trees that include oak, hazel, bramble and honeysuckle, ideally linked to other woods and with a good hedge network. Coppicing and deer management should also be practised there.



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22-26
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Set in magnificent parkland, the RHS Flower Show Tatton Park showcases the best in gardening. With a carnival-like atmosphere, it offers sensational show gardens and floral displays. Three different zones are full of inspiration. Find out about growing your own in the Feast zone, tempt your taste buds at the Feast Theatre's demonstrations and see the stunning RHS Summer Fruit and Vegetable Pavilion. Plus, visit Great British Allotments and discover the Garden Hideaways area.

Enter the Inspire zone to fire your imagination. Three young designers will create their first show gardens, which will sit alongside dazzling conceptual plots to celebrate the International Year of

Light. Pick up floristry tips at the Floral Design Studio and admire the talent at the World Skills Landscaping Competition.

The Grow zone is a plant-lover's paradise, where you will be surrounded by Britain's finest flowers, fruit and vegetables in the new-look RHS Floral Marquee and Plant Village. You can also see the enchanting RHS National Flower Bed Competition and take in the new Blooming Beds displays. And don't forget to visit the Country Living Magazine Pavilion to find beautiful pieces for the home and garden. With the latest gardening knowledge, artisan food markets and more than 250 stalls, the RHS Flower Show Tatton Park is a great day out for the whole family.



DAY(S)	TIMES	MEMBERS	PUBLIC	CL PRICE*
Wednesday 22 July (RHS members only)	10am-6.30pm	£26	N/A	N/A
Thursday 23- Sunday 26 July**	10am-6.30pm	£20.50	£25 in advance or £30 on day	£23 in advance

To book tickets, call **0844 338 7527**, quoting **TATCL**, or visit **rhs.org.uk/tatton**

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OUT & ABOUT

Marchants Hardy Plants near Lewes in East Sussex is tucked down a tiny lane off the B2124, but its hidden location doesn't stop horticultural enthusiasts making a beeline for its well-grown specimens and myriad unusual varieties. Everything is propagated and grown at the nursery by owner Graham Gough. Add to that a beautiful setting and an inspiring garden filled with the herbaceous perennials and ornamental grasses, and the attraction becomes obvious (marchantshardyplants.co.uk).



GROW YOUR OWN

Charles Dowding's latest book, *How to Create a New Vegetable Garden* (Green Books, £19.99), provides invaluable help and advice for anyone starting a productive plot from scratch or taking over a neglected allotment. Charles is the leading proponent of no-dig gardening, so although he emphasises the first year will involve hard work, double digging the plot will not be part of it. CL readers can receive a 30% discount and free delivery until 31 May 2015 from greenbooks.co.uk if you quote the code CLMAY15.

garden notes



Everything you need to know to get the most from your plot in May

WORDS BY STEPHANIE DONALDSON

spring finery, plus it's a great place to source reasonably priced garden accessories. Provided you are prepared for wet weather and wear wellies, a good time is guaranteed. Chelsea follows hot on its heels and, despite the crowds and wall-to-wall television coverage, there is still nothing like it for the best in garden design and exciting plant introductions. I will also be checking my NGS Yellow Book for new entries and old favourites nearby, so I can pop out to stroll around a garden, followed by tea and cake. If there's a more enjoyable way of helping charitable causes, I can't bring it to mind. See what caught my eye at theenduringgardener.com and find gardens to visit at ngs.org.uk.

THIS MONTH...

I always feel pulled in two directions during May. I want to spend every daylight hour in my own garden, but I also like to go and see other plots, plus visit all the flower shows. These outings provide opportunities to talk to other gardeners, buy plants and make a note of appealing combinations. Some events are unmissable – I didn't make it to the last Malvern Show, so I will definitely be there this year. In many ways, it's my favourite – the show's in a wonderful setting and all the plants are in their

WHAT TO DO

In the greenhouse

Pot on seedlings as soon as they are big enough to handle.

Harden off young plants by moving them outdoors during the day.

Sow basil, chervil, dill and parsley.

Introduce biological controls.

In the garden

Prune back overlarge clematis.

Mulch borders by the middle of May.

Divide 'blind' daffodils and plant in a fresh spot.

Pick scarlet lily beetles off lilies and fritillaria.

On the allotment

Mulch around fruit trees and bushes to retain moisture and discourage weeds.

Cover strawberry beds with straw.

Sow root vegetables and autumn brassicas. ➔





FISHY BUSINESS

If you want to add a simple design element to your garden, how about a shoal of metal trout swimming through a border or weaving in and out of ornamental grasses? The designs from Crocus are guaranteed to draw comment and provide eye-catching structure throughout the year. Each fish is 24cm long, stands on an 86cm-high stake and costs £9.99 (crocus.co.uk).

BUY WISELY

Cat scarers

CATWATCH ULTRASONIC

CAT DETERRENT This produces ultrasound when a cat is in range so the feline doesn't get used to it. The unit will protect an area of 125 sq m with an angle of 100° (£54.95; marshalls-seeds.co.uk).

PHAZER HANDHELD

ULTRASONIC Emits a burst of ultrasound when directed at a troublesome cat. It cannot be used through glass (£53.94; deteracat.co.uk).

CATCLEAR WATER JET PACK

Uses an infra-red sensor to detect movement and release a jet of water. It has a sensitivity setting and spans an arc of 14m x 10m (£64.80; deteracat.co.uk).



Top tomato

If you live in an area where blight is a problem, help is now at hand in the form of a new tomato, 'Crimson Crush', which is resistant to common strains of the disease that have run rampant in the past few years. It also promises great yields of flavoursome large tomatoes weighing up to 200g each. 'Crimson Crush' is available from Suttons (£7.99 for three plants, suttons.co.uk).

Tip: view photos of your favourite flower-show gardens in black and white to reveal the underlying shapes and textures

PICK OF THE SHRUBS

Exochorda x macrantha
'The Bride'

WHY? This beautiful deciduous shrub is at its loveliest in late spring, when its arching stems are so smothered in pure white flowers that the leaves are practically invisible.

WHERE? It grows best in full sun in an open position, but will tolerate light shade and can also be trained as a wall shrub. To see it in its full glory, plant where it can cascade over a terrace wall.

BEWARE *Exochorda* flowers on last year's shoots, so must be pruned immediately afterwards – if you prune too late, it will not have time to grow its flowering stems for the following year.



EVENT Don't miss the Plant Hunters' Fair at The National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire, on Saturday 23 May (planthuntersfairs.co.uk).



Clever cooking



Enjoy a combination of classic looks and 21st-century technology in your kitchen with the innovative new designs from Aga

Providing a reassuring presence, welcoming warmth and wonderful food, Aga range cookers have been at the heart of the home for more than 90 years. And to cater for the changing needs of modern life, new Aga models feature the traditional iconic styling with all the benefits of 21st-century technology.

On when you need them and off when you don't, the new electric models Aga Total Control and Aga Dual Control offer greater control and flexibility but with the same Aga radiant-heat cooking that locks in flavour, whether you are roasting or baking. Perfect for today's hectic pace of life, the

Total Control has a touch-screen panel that enables each of the ovens – with super-fast heat-up times – and the two hotplates to be operated independently. The Dual Control also has independently operated hotplates together with a low-energy setting for the ovens, resulting in reduced running and servicing costs. Both models are available in 14 colours with three or five ovens. If space is an issue, look for the new Aga City60 – at just 60cm wide, it is the same size as a standard slot-in cooker. So whether you have always wanted an Aga or wish to upgrade to a more efficient model, there is a design that's right for your home and lifestyle.



TOP 3-oven
Aga Dual Control
in Cream
ABOVE 5-oven
Aga Total Control
in Aqua
LEFT The iconic
Aga badge

There are more than 60 Aga stores in the UK offering live demonstrations. To find the one nearest to you, call 0845 481 0062 or visit agaliving.com.

SECRETS *of a* GLORIOUS GARDEN

In this series we follow the growing year in the beautiful gardens at Loseley Park in Surrey, with plenty of practical ideas for you to use in your own plot

WORDS BY STEPHANIE DONALDSON • PHOTOGRAPHS BY JASON INGRAM



MAY: CLEARING AND PLANTING

WITH THE WALLED GARDEN now open, some of the noisier routine tasks – including mowing and hedge trimming – need to take place early in the morning or after it has closed to the public. Not everything happens behind the scenes, though, and head gardener Richard Burnip ('Burney') and his team get on with their work under the gaze of interested visitors, who take advantage of the opportunity to ask a question or two. The main job this month is to clear the spring displays and plant out the half-hardy summer bedding that has now been hardened off and is ready for transplanting.

PLANT COMBINATION
OF THE MONTH
SWEET ROCKET,
FOXGLOVES
AND ALLIUMS

These three plants are the perfect marriage of shape, colour and fragrance. Sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*) is a fragrant hardy biennial that self-seeds in the herb garden at Loseley, as do the foxgloves (*digitalis*), while the alliums have multiplied greatly since they were first planted. A packet of sweet rocket seeds will produce blooms in shades of purple, pink and white. Sow in June to flower the following year.

LOSELEY
PARK &
GARDENS

Standing in ancient parkland close to the North Downs, this Surrey estate has been home to the More-Molyneux family for more than 500 years. The two-and-a-half-acre walled garden has undergone an impressive renaissance over the past 20 years, spearheaded by the current owners Michael and Sarah More-Molyneux. As head gardener Richard Burnip says: "We all have the same gardening problems, ours are just on a larger scale." ➔



Teucrium hircanicum
'Paradise Delight'



Dahlia tubers
sprouting into life



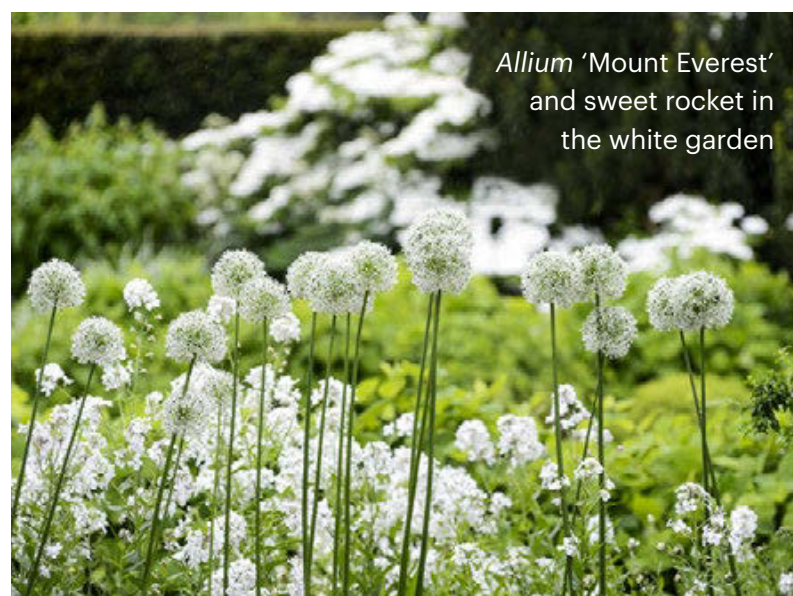
Fragrant
Hesperis matronalis



Zinnia
seedlings
grown
as plugs



Geraniums fill a
weathered pot



Allium 'Mount Everest'
and sweet rocket in
the white garden



Lime euphorbia
contrasts vividly
with purple alliums
and foxgloves



Aquilegia vulgaris

SEASONAL TASKS AT LOSELEY

- Certain perennials, such as teucrium (top left), veronica, *Campanula lactiflora* and sedum are given the 'Chelsea chop' to extend or delay flowering (watch the video at countryliving.co.uk)
- Dahlia tubers (top centre) stored under cover over winter and started into growth are planted out into the borders
- Cuttings are taken of osteospermum and marguerites
- Weeds are hoed before they pass the seedling stage
- Large pots in the garden are filled with scented leaf geraniums (centre)
- Zinnia plugs are potted on (centre left) so they can be planted out later with a minimum of root disturbance
- Brassicas are put into the vegetable garden and potatoes earthed up to prevent exposure to light

TECHNIQUE OF THE MONTH

PLANTING OUT SUMMER BEDDING

Once the spring bedding has finished flowering, the team clear the spent plants and prepare the soil for the thousands of annuals that will follow. These invaluable space-fillers bring colour to the borders all summer, complementing the perennials that tend to flower for a shorter period. You don't need grand borders for this – just scale the numbers down and weave among other plants rather than creating large groups.



- Clear away spent spring bedding, including forget-me-nots and wallflowers



- Harden off plants: move them to a coldframe or place outside during the day for several days



- Spread a thin covering of well-rotted compost evenly on the ground and fork in lightly



- Firm down the prepared planting area by treading the soil evenly with your feet



- Set out the plants while in their pots to adjust spacing before knocking them out



- Dig the holes one at a time and plant before moving on to the next one. Water in well



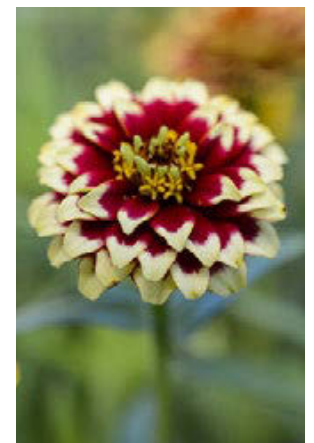
A CAUTIONARY TALE

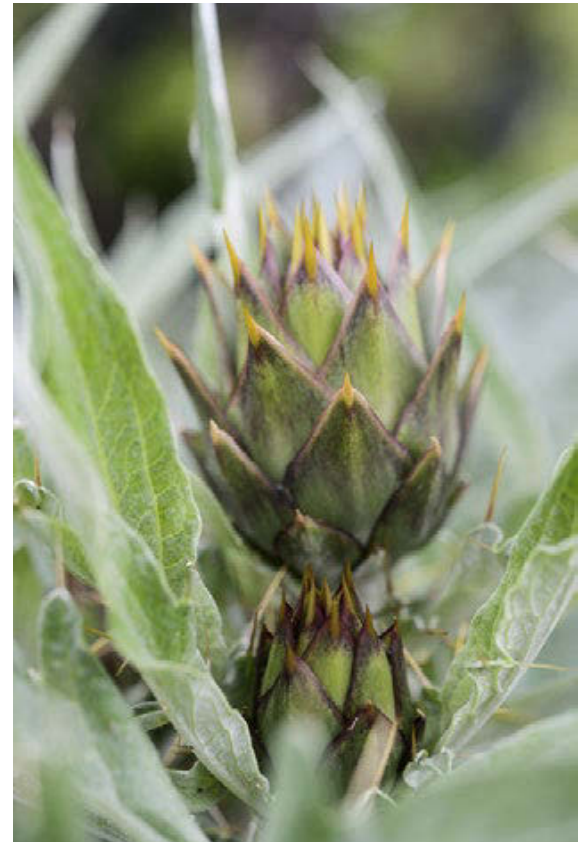
Even experts find themselves dealing with unexpected problems. A faulty batch of potting compost meant that some of the seedlings that Burney and the team transplanted earlier in the year remained stunted long after their companions were ready to be planted out. Always buy quality potting compost and store it undercover, if possible, for reliable results. If you have a similar problem, report it to the seller – it's fairly rare, but can happen.

BURNEY'S TIP FOR MAY

HOW TO HELP SEEDLINGS FLOURISH

Before potting on young seedlings, gently remove a couple from their cells to check that they have a well-developed root system – if not, leave them for a bit longer before moving them into individual pots. If the rootball falls apart during transplanting, it will take them longer to establish. ➔





THE HERB GARDEN

Herb gardens are seldom on the scale of the one at Loseley, where four large quadrants divide the area to feature the different classifications of useful plants – medicinal, culinary, household and decorative. Long before modern medicine, herbs would have played a vital part in keeping this household healthy, as well as being used for teas, to flavour the food, to repel pests and to scent the house. Today's patch may be a contemporary interpretation, but many of the plants grown here would have been in common usage at Loseley in the past. Most of us will be familiar with the majority of herbs in the culinary quadrant – and probably grow a few in our own gardens – but even here there are ideas for expanding your repertoire, including sweet cicely, Welsh onion and the marvellously architectural angelica and cardoon.

There are treasures to be found in the other quadrants, too. You may not have space for more than a select few, but they will make a fine addition to a border, potager or group of pots. The cut-leaved elder might be considered a medicinal plant, but it is also extremely decorative, while sweet woodruff, traditionally used as a strewing herb to freshen the air, is also a brilliant ground-cover

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Tall clipped bay trees provide a dramatic focus in the herb garden; star-shaped blooms of *Borago officinalis* var. 'Alba'; chive flowers are popular with

bees; a spiky cardoon head; the striking foliage of *Silybum marianum* or milk thistle; beautiful *Baptisia australis*; stunning *Allium cristophii*; pale *Allium fistulosum* (Welsh onion)



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MATTRESSES AND PILLOWS

GARDENING

plant for damp shade. Although you are unlikely to dye your clothes with woad (*Isatis tinctoria*), it does make a lovely early summer-flowering biennial.

DIVIDE & RULE

There are two types of perennial herbs – those that love the sun and those that prefer a bit of shade. Unless your herb garden is large enough to include both, it may be best to separate the two types and grow them in their preferred environment. Sun-loving varieties generally hail from the Mediterranean and do best in well-drained

ground where they can bake in summer and avoid cold, wet soil in winter. This category includes rosemary, thyme, sage, oregano and annual basil. Herbs that originate in cooler, damper climates will be productive longer if grown in partial shade – otherwise they have a tendency to go to seed. Parsley, mint, lemon balm, comfrey and annuals chervil and coriander do well in these conditions. 🌿

📍 *Loseley Park, Guildford, Surrey (01483 304440; loseleypark.co.uk). Gardens open from May to end of September, Sunday-Thursday (including bank holidays).*

SEE PAGE 21
FOR DETAILS
OF CL'S 30th
BIRTHDAY
PARTY AT
LOSELEY PARK
IN JUNE

GET MORE ONLINE
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HOW TO PLANT SEEDS AT
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An intriguing Dorset property has been transformed into a stylish house and business, where vintage furniture and coastal ephemera make every guest feel at home

WORDS BY MELANIE MOLESWORTH • PHOTOGRAPHS BY CATHERINE GRATWICKE



OPPOSITE

Seaweed, fish and shell illustrations from vintage nature books are displayed on a wall painted in Farrow & Ball's Parma Gray **THIS PAGE** A generous dining table is surrounded by an eclectic mix of mismatched chairs



Surprisingly, my husband Martin and I had never been to Lyme Regis and knew little of this gem of a seaside town when we drove down to Dorset from London to take a peek at The Arched House two years ago. We'd come across it on a rather random property search on the internet and we were intrigued – our two sons had recently left home and we felt it was a good time to try something new. It seemed a daunting project, though – essentially two interlinked buildings spanning the River Lym just a few yards from the beachfront. One was a huge assembly hall, which until recently had been the Lyme Regis Conservative Club, complete with a snooker room, 1980s gym and sauna; the other a pretty, but run-down, eight-bedroom Georgian townhouse.

The windows rattled when the wind whipped in off the sea and we lost ourselves in the maze of rooms. But the bones seemed sound, and we could look out to the sea from the top floor, hear the river running beneath and enjoy a heady whiff of fresh sourdough bread from Town Mill Bakery right next door... We were seduced. A couple of weeks later, our London home was up for sale and we were planning our great escape. We knew the property was special, but when we bought it, we still weren't sure what we would do with it. The whole place had been let out as a holiday rental in the past, catering for up to 20 (which explained the ten haphazardly placed bathrooms). Our idea was to generate an income by using part of the property in the same way but still have room for our own space.

Fortunately, our great friend Ed Howell, an architect, agreed to help us with the project and his vision proved key to turning this ramshackle place into a viable home and business. New staircases were installed, and previously dark corridors leading to odd useless spaces were stripped out to allow light in and an easy flow between rooms. Our



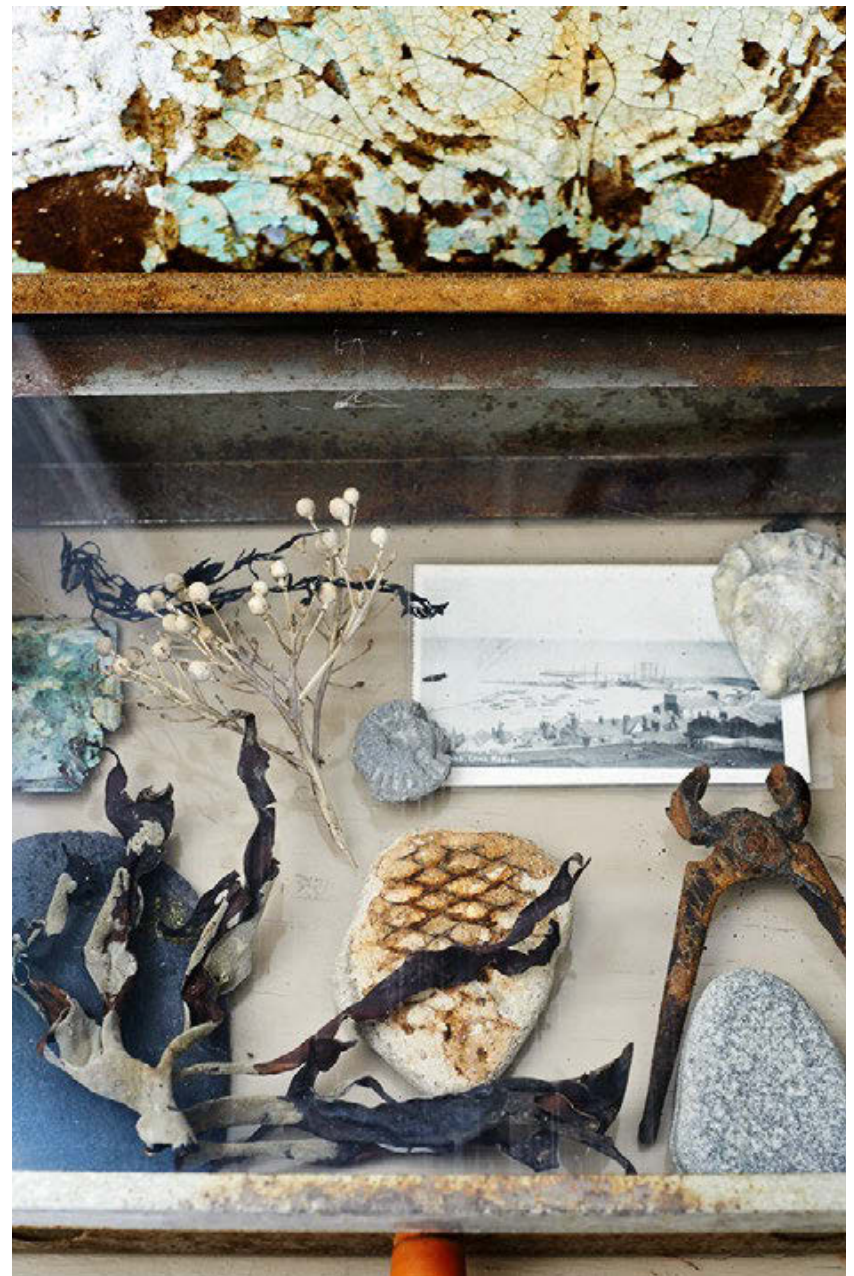
OPPOSITE Quirky accessories and pieces of furniture suit the relaxed mood of the kitchen – the exterior of the house has been painted in a similar palette to the interior **THIS PAGE** The living-room chairs are covered in a mix of plain linens from GP & J Baker with Ian Mankin stripes

main family space is now the old assembly room – a large area containing kitchen, dining and living chambers – and we were able to steal three bedrooms at the top for ourselves, leaving the rest of the house for renters. The aim was to create a comfortable holiday home from home. When our two sons were younger, we spent plenty of breaks in dull properties, and I had longed for somewhere cosier with wood fires, comfy sofas and great showers. My experience working as an interiors stylist certainly helped when it came to the renovations; after years of putting together rooms for magazine shoots and photographing some amazing homes, I felt ready to take on the challenge.

My personal style has always been 'keep it simple', and this kept costs down. We furnished the rental house with a mix of vintage and new; nothing too precious but everything lovely. For the kitchen we gathered a collection of mismatched bentwood and school chairs, which we found in local vintage shops, markets and car-boot sales. I kept an eye out for interesting things to hang on the walls – old maps, coastal charts, fossil prints and an old school blackboard – and at last my vintage seaweed illustrations had found a perfect home.

We changed the rooms very little, replacing grim tacked-on 1970s bathrooms with modern shower rooms – enlivening them with boldly patterned oilcloth from The Swedish Fabric Company – opening up the fireplaces in the living rooms and installing a new kitchen. Here, we discovered a huge fireplace and bread oven, which now houses the new cooker. We recycled whenever possible, too. Some old doors were made into built-in bedroom storage, a bookcase was moved from the hall to serve as a dresser in the kitchen, and old chests of drawers and tables were revived with a lick of paint. Many ➔





OPPOSITE Blue and white china, and a sofa covered in a navy fabric by Romo, create a contemporary nautical feel in a living room **THIS PAGE** A vintage

shipping-line blanket has given new life to an old sofa, while a collection of Melanie's coastal ephemera is displayed in a metal garden coldframe



To create a calm feel, we chose a pale palette of greys, blues and greens

of the rooms still had original 1950s textured wallpaper, which we painted over rather than stripped off. I was thrilled when old tongue-and-groove panelling was revealed behind hardboard in one of the bedrooms, complete with a scribbled autograph dated 1915.

To create a calm, coastal feel, we chose a pale palette of greys, blues and greens for the walls and accented the original panelling with darker tones. The old wooden floorboards were painted with Dulux Grey Steel floorpaint on the upper floors and Dulux Rich Praline for the ground. The exception was in the kitchen where a crisp 'shirt white' on the wood panelling makes the most of the amazing morning light bouncing in off the river.

The rugs that now add a warm touch to the floors were made using off-cuts from the nearby Axminster Carpets factory outlet, while we bought vintage armchairs and sofas from the auction house in Crewkerne and Bridport antiques market. My stepmother-in-law Jill re-covered an old sofa using a ship's blanket I'd had for years, and transformed armchairs with panels of linens and tickings. Martin made the headboard from weathered beach-hut timbers and carried out woodwork surgery on my wonkiest junk-shop finds.

I have now joined the local gig-rowing club and attend the weekly Sew La-Di-Da Vintage class in The Town Mill, where I have made valances to jazz up our Ikea bed bases, as well as cushions and curtains, the odd frock and some new friends. The Arched House Holiday Rental is busy and I am getting to grips with decorating the assembly hall – in between photoshoots, coastal walks, creating my collection of pressed seaweed and organising painting courses. It's been a busy couple of years but we've never regretted the move. 

 Visit thearchedhouse.com for information about rentals and painting courses.

OPPOSITE Stylish arrangements of artwork create individual character in every bedroom

THIS PAGE The original weathered panels in this guest bedroom were discovered behind wallpapered hardboard





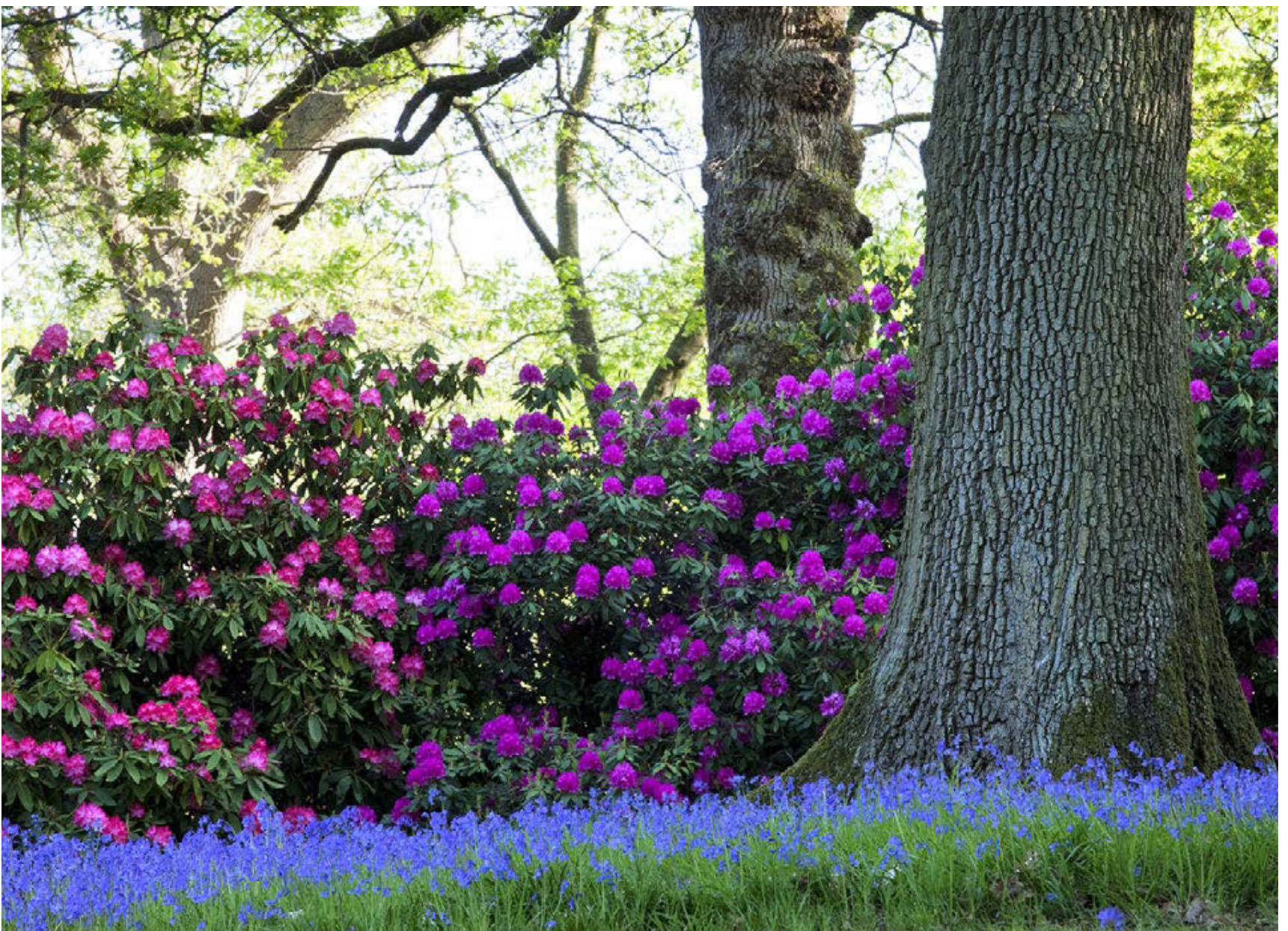
THIS PAGE

Eye-catching *R.* 'Mrs
Lionel de Rothschild'

OPPOSITE


R. 'Armistice Day'
provides a bold and
colourful backdrop to a
sea of brilliant bluebells

Bowood in bloom



Dazzling displays of bright and beautiful rhododendrons and swathes of glorious bluebells await visitors to the woodland glades of Wiltshire's Bowood House in May and early June

WORDS BY STEPHANIE DONALDSON ● PHOTOGRAPHS BY LYNN KEDDIE



There's nothing shy and retiring about the rhododendron family – the colours are vibrant, the flowerheads large and voluptuous – and the delicious fragrance of *Rhododendron luteum* (commonly known as the yellow azalea) drifting in the air will stop you in your tracks. To see them in their full glory, visit the woodland garden at Bowood House in Wiltshire during May and early June, when the mature glades of rhododendrons are in full and magnificent bloom. Immense undulating drifts, some reaching ten metres high, blend brilliant- and subtle-hued shades along pathways that wind through the 70 acres, where carpets of bluebells fringe the paths.

THIS PAGE R. 'Ascot Brilliant' **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** R. 'Loderi Pink Topaz'; R. 'Ascot Brilliant' and R. 'Loder's White'; eye-catching R. 'Apple Blossom'; pale R. 'April Showers'

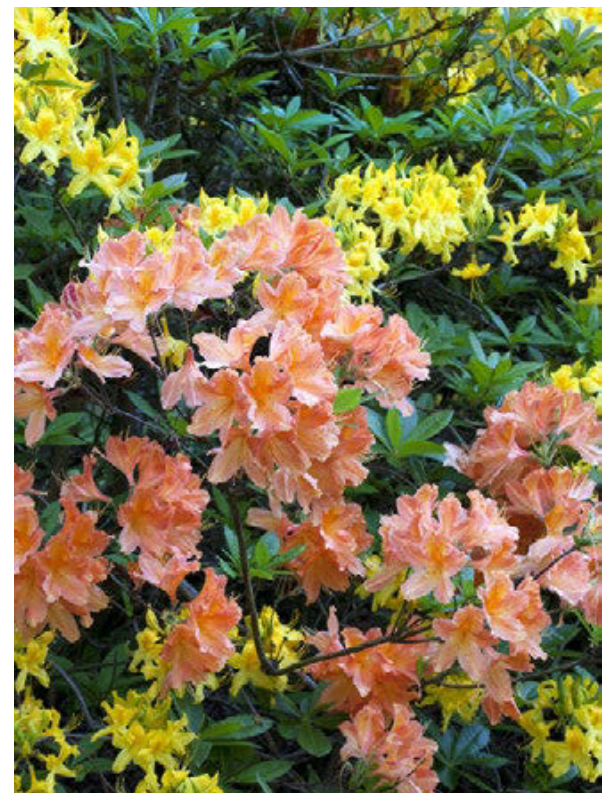
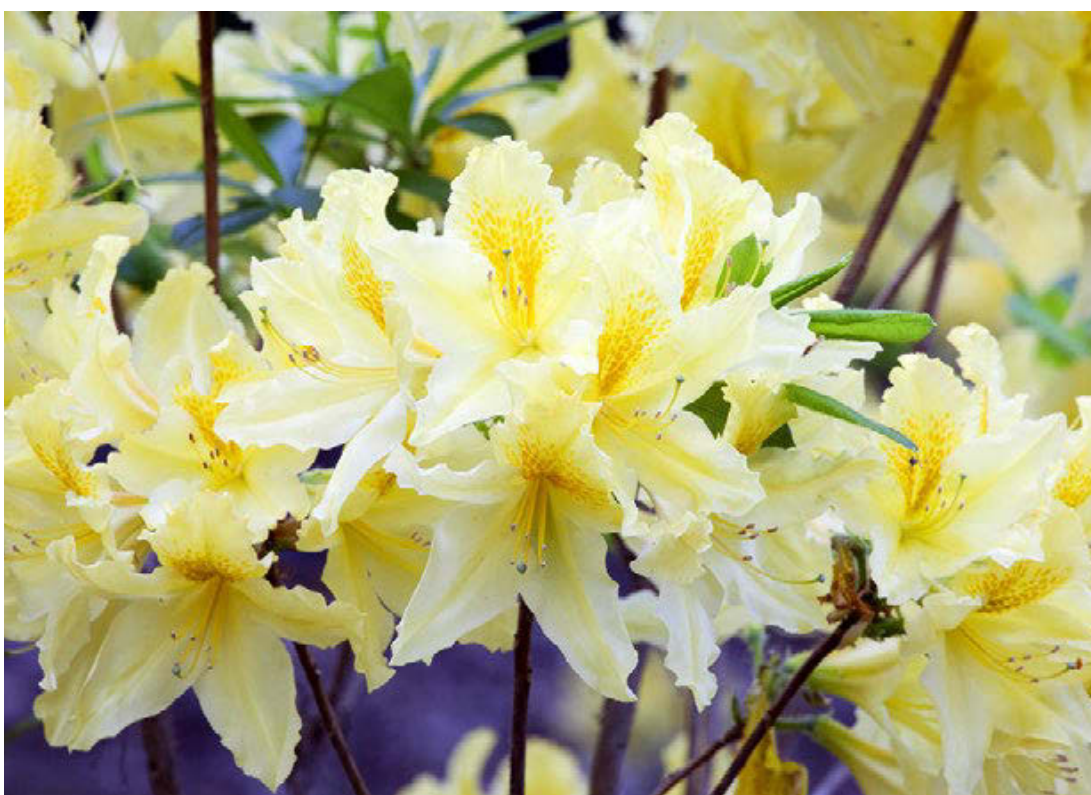
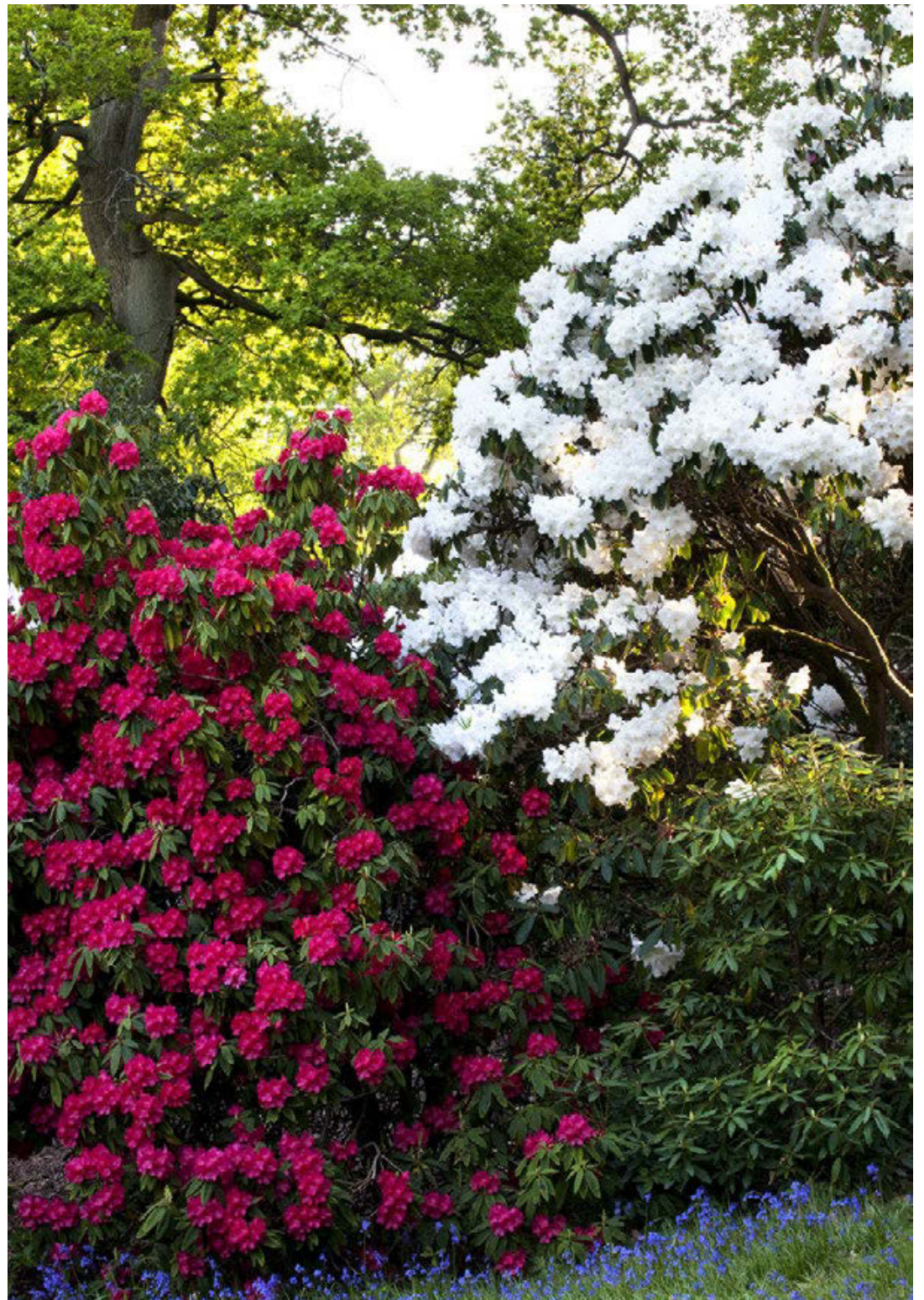
Successive generations of the resident Lansdowne family have been planting this hillside with rhododendrons since 1854. The third Marquis established the original planting, while the fifth expanded the garden and added many more varieties. The current Lord Lansdowne (and ninth Marquis) continues

this tradition in a very hands-on manner. He loves nothing more than escaping his other duties and disappearing across the parkland in his battered four-wheel drive for a bit of woodland management: it may be clearing land with the help of a specially adapted digger, pruning or planting. Tucked well away, there's a shed where he can get on with repairing tools and machinery, and a modest greenhouse for propagating seed he has gathered and growing-on cuttings with the help of a misting unit. Rhododendrons root readily from layering (making a shallow cut in a low-growing branch and pinning it to the ground), so he also uses this technique on selected specimens to increase the collection.

Fortunately, there's no shortage of things to keep the Marquis happily occupied for the foreseeable future and even in such an established setting there are opportunities for planting new areas. Most recent is the four-acre Jubilee Garden, which was



Magnificent
voluptuous
flowerheads
in rainbow
hues create a
spectacular
show





THIS PAGE A pale pink *R.* 'Bowood Group' hybrid **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Stunning *R.* 'Purple Splendour'; *R. campanulatum* x *pictum*; *R. augustinii* 'Bowood Blue'; yellow azalea *R. luteum*; *R.* 'Loder's White'; *R. orbiculare*

PLANTING TIPS FOR RHODODENDRONS

- Acid soil is essential for most varieties and it is important that it has moisture-retentive qualities.
- The evergreen foliage provides structure in the garden throughout the year, but can be dull once the blooms have finished. To extend the flowering season, mix rhododendrons with other acid-loving shrubs, such as Japanese maples, magnolias, cornus and pieris.
- The dense canopy and shallow roots of mature rhododendrons prevent other plants establishing nearby. Choose varieties carefully to fit the scale of your garden: left to their own devices, some become very large.
- There are many lovely pastel-hued cultivars if vibrant combinations are not to your taste. Buy plants when they are in flower so you can be sure you like the colour of the blooms.
- To plant, prepare a large hole and incorporate plenty of leaf mould and well-rotted compost into it. Rhododendrons are shallow rooters, so ensure the rootball is level with the surrounding soil. Water well and mulch with leaf mould, composted bark or pine needles (not nutrient-rich animal manure or lime-rich spent mushroom compost), but keep the stem free of mulch.

begun in 2006 in a small valley with a stream at its centre. Compared with the rest of the woodland garden, it is still in its infancy, but it has allowed Lord Lansdowne to make his own mark as he has planted it with favourite varieties and extended the season of interest by adding other shrubs, including hydrangeas, magnolias, cornus and eucryphia. Few of us have the acreage or the legacy of planting that exists at Bowood, but for anyone who has more modest inclinations to grow rhododendrons, a visit here will provide colourful inspiration.

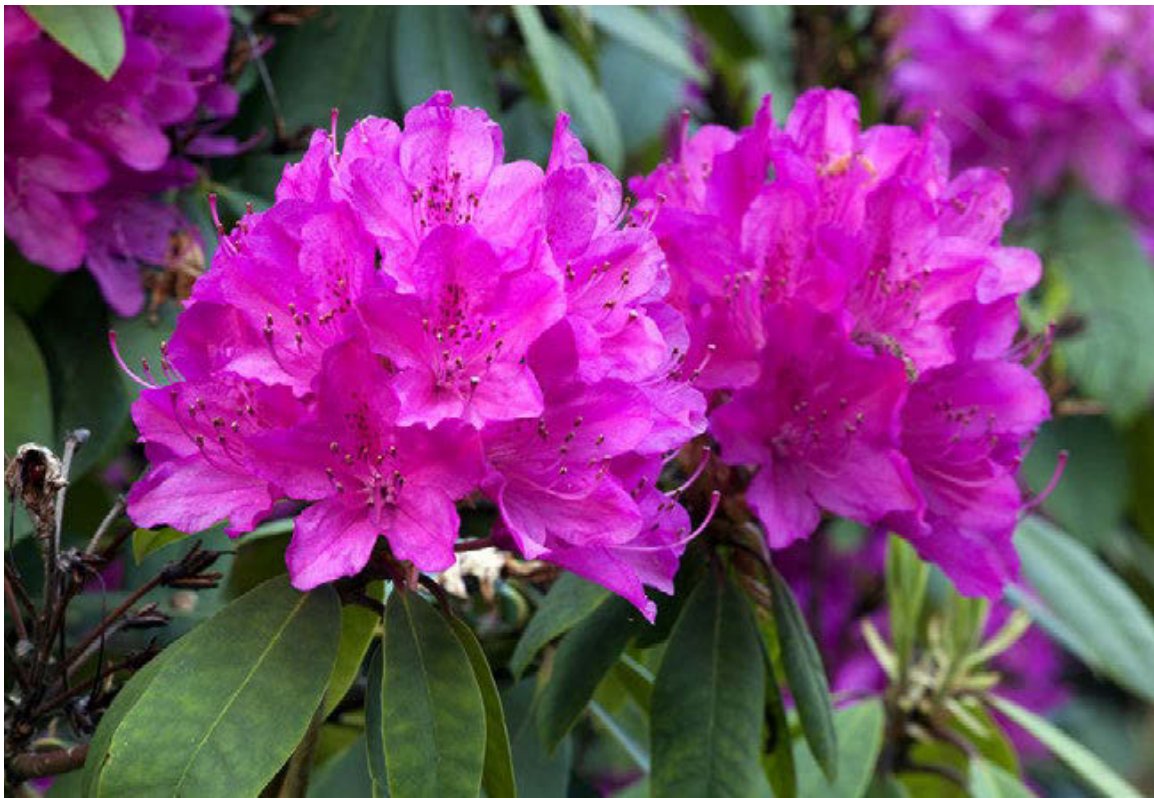
WHERE TO GROW

As a general guide, the smaller the leaf of the rhododendron, the more sun-tolerant it will be. Large-leaved specimens are woodland plants and, to grow well, they need the shade and shelter provided by a canopy of mature deciduous trees. Compact and dwarf varieties and evergreen and deciduous azaleas are all suitable for container-growing in ericaceous compost. They must not be allowed to dry out (or become waterlogged) and should be watered with rainwater.

THE MENACE OF THE WILD RHODODENDRON

There's no doubt that the sight of a hillside covered in the wild purple *Rhododendron ponticum* in full bloom is very attractive, but it comes at a great cost to the native flora and fauna. Since it was planted as cover for pheasants in Victorian times, it has thrived in the damp conditions in the north and west of Britain and taken over great tracts of countryside, squeezing out other plant species and proving very unwelcoming (and poisonous) to wildlife. It is also incredibly difficult to eradicate. A single large bush is able to produce up to one million seeds in a single year, so even if the parent plant is removed, it still requires several years of controlling the seedlings. If all of this was not worrying enough, in recent years it has also been established that it is host to the plant disease phytophthora, which threatens to kill many of our favourite native shrubs and garden trees. However, two things can be done to help – firstly, buy rhododendron cultivars (never *R. ponticum*) from reputable specialist growers and, secondly, work as a conservation volunteer assisting organisations including the National Trust and the Woodland Trust with clearance programmes. 🌿

📍 Specialist nurseries: *Glendoick Garden Centre, Glendoick, Glencarse, Perth (01738 860260; glendoick.com); Burncoose Nurseries, Gwennap, Redruth, Cornwall (01209 860316; burncoose.co.uk); Millais Nurseries, Churt, Farnham, Surrey (01252 792698; rhododendrons.co.uk); Loder Plants, Lower Beeding, Horsham, West Sussex (01403 891412; loder-plants.co.uk)*



FOUR FAVOURITE VARIETIES

- ***R. augustinii*** (above) Striking violet-blue funnel-shaped flowers on a small-leaved shrub; 1.4m-1.6m high.
- ***R. 'Loder's White'*** (far left) Upright clusters of mauve-pink buds opening to trusses of slightly fragrant trumpet-shaped white flowers up to 10cm across; 1.5m-2.5m high.
- ***R. luteum* (yellow azalea)** (left) Scented blooms on a deciduous shrub with vivid-hued autumn foliage; 2.5m-4m high.
- ***R. campanulatum x pictum*** (top right) Natural hybrid bearing pale lilac-pink flowers with speckled throats; attractive large glossy leaves; reaches 1.5m in ten years.

COOL CALM & collected

A mix of contemporary and antique pieces is the key to an elegant family home in the Thames Valley

WORDS BY SUE GILKES • STYLING BY LAURA VINE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY CATHERINE GRATWICKE



OPPOSITE A simple, stunning arrangement of lilac blossom and eye-catching accessories make a stylish statement in the sitting room **THIS PAGE** A glazed cupboard beside the

fireplace in the dining room holds an eclectic display of antique china, beautiful shells, delicate coral and other natural finds, which add to the air of appealing rustic elegance





THIS PAGE, LEFT A striking metal clock by Weathereye, antiqued-mirror splashback and blind in a bold geometric pattern by GP & J Baker introduce distinctive decorative touches to a classic, white-painted Harvey Jones kitchen **BELOW** Cushions in shades of grey and blue echo the colours of a moody seascape on the wall in the sitting room **OPPOSITE** A set of antique framed botanist papers hang above a wrought-iron console table in the dining room, which was skilfully repurposed from an antique French balcony by Tyson London



When you've experienced the delights of a rural upbringing but find yourself living in the city, it's usually only a matter of time before the call of the countryside proves too great to resist. For Fiona Parke and her husband Patrick, the tipping point came a few months after the birth of their daughter Chloë. "I wanted her first steps to be on a patch of grass rather than an urban concrete patio," Fiona recalls. "We craved green fields and open spaces – we'd lived in London for 12 years and it was time for a change."

However, with both their jobs based in the city, they needed to find a place within commuting distance with good transport links. They settled on the area around Reading in Berkshire with its fast train service into Paddington, and when they came across a handsome Georgian property, complete with walled garden, just 20 minutes from the station, it fitted the bill perfectly. The most distinguished of a cluster of old properties on the edge of a village by the Thames near Pangbourne, the listed house had been built on the ruins of a 13th-century Benedictine abbey by a merchant in 1750 and split into two separate residences in the 1950s.

When the couple bought it in October 2008, the plan was to rent it out for a time while they transitioned into their new rural life, so they

prioritised the rooms most in need of renovation to get it ready for tenants. Fortunately, working as an interior designer at Todhunter Earle Interiors for several years had given Fiona the necessary skills to transform the rather tired property. Floorboards were stripped, then lightened with lye and treated with white oil for a pale Scandinavian look, complemented with a palette of muted off-whites by Farrow & Ball throughout to accentuate the wonderful light in the house.

Three months of renovations later, with prospective tenants lined up, Fiona realised she wasn't keen to relinquish her new house to strangers – she wanted to live there herself! So they rented out their London flat instead and made their move to the country when Chloë was 16 months old. But, having decided to make it their home, various other elements then needed to be sorted out in order to get it just the way they wanted.

Arranged over three floors, it has an unusual layout, with the lower ground floor half underground as it is built into a slope. Damp was an issue, so they tanked the walls to keep moisture from seeping through, then created a shower room, study, wine cellar and guest bedroom on this level. Although the kitchen had been freshened up, and its Eighties stencilling covered with a coat of paint in the initial refurbishment, it was 30 years old and showing its age: the family lived with it for a

“I love the
idea of a
curated
history of
my life via
objects”



“I mix
new
pieces
with
antique
finds as
I don’t
want the
house to
look like
a show
home
– or a
museum”





couple of years until, after selling their London flat, they could afford to replace it with an elegant white-painted design by Harvey Jones.

By the same token, they were able at last to remove the Jacuzzi in the main bathroom on the top floor, where a free-standing bath from William Holland – an extravagance beyond reach until Fiona found one on ebay – now stands in its place. Although she favours a clean, unfussy look, she is by no means a minimalist. “I like good design and would describe my style as modern classic,” she says. Calm greys and whites create a cool, calm scheme throughout, with fascinating antique finds and elegant rustic pieces, such as the painted Gustavian-influenced chairs in the dining room, balancing more contemporary elements.

“You have to consider the age of the house and be respectful of its character when designing,” Fiona explains, “while making the space work for your needs.” In creating a stylish yet relaxed, comfortable home for her family, she has fulfilled her own brief perfectly. 

 Visit johnstonparkeinteriors.com or call 07801 521000.

OPPOSITE The calming grey of Paint & Paper Library’s Lead III picks up on the cool hues of a favourite painting, found years ago in an antiques shop, and the Calacatta marble worktop in the kitchen **THIS PAGE**, **CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Fiona loves the flickering light of tea lights and candles – in the dining room, silvered-glass votives are grouped together on a bevelled piece of mirror to enhance the effect; empty vintage gilt frames make a

stylish statement above a metal demi-lune table on which a few carefully curated finds are displayed; in the main bedroom, walls in Sanderson’s New Silver are the perfect foil for a bespoke upholstered headboard by The Chairman & Son in London and a mix of velvet cushions in rich blue and dusky pink; the warm natural tones of the wooden doors and original panelling on the ceiling of the hallway add depth and texture to the pale decorating scheme



SARAH RAVEN

is best known for her work as a gardener and author but she also studied medicine at the University of London and then worked as a junior doctor at Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton. Since her medical training, she has become interested in healthy eating and what it means to her cooking. Here, she focuses on exceptionally good foods that she believes should be included in our diet as much as possible – and how to eat them. Using information gathered from nutritionists, medical journals and research centres, and based on her own discoveries, Sarah has distilled that knowledge into a collection of 12 fruits and vegetables, from kale and blood oranges to tomatoes and beetroot.

Sarah Raven's SUPERFOODS

Every month, Sarah picks the healthiest fruit and vegetables to eat in season, with delicious recipes to make the most of their flavours and natural goodness

MAY: SWEET POTATOES

WORDS, RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY SARAH RAVEN ● PHOTOGRAPHS BY JONATHAN BUCKLEY
FOOD AND DRINK EDITOR ALISON WALKER



AS A NATION, we're devoted to potatoes, eaten every which way. But why not use more of the healthy, coral-orange sweet potato? I make a dish similar to dauphinoise potatoes, with sweet potato, coconut, ginger and lime (see overleaf), which has the same comforting texture, yet a much greater nutritional value. The same is true of soup: swap cream-laden vichyssoise for my super-healthy, saffron-coloured sweet potato, carrot and peanut butter recipe. It's one of my favourites.

The sweet potato is a great source of fibre and vitamins, particularly C and B6. Also, like carrots, the orange-fleshed varieties are packed

with an orange pigment called beta-carotene (in the family of carotenoids). The deeper the orange, the greater the density of the pigments; sweet potatoes have the highest level, followed by carrots, and other orange and yellow fruit and vegetables, such as squash, melon, peppers and apricots. Surprisingly, the dark, leafy greens kale and spinach also have high concentrations.

Beta-carotene aids night-time vision, is anti-inflammatory and appears to help the immune system. However, most importantly, diets rich in carotenoid-dense foods (beta-carotene included) can help ➔





to prevent cancer. A large study at Harvard University showed a 32 per cent reduction in the risk of lung cancer in those who consumed more carotenoid-rich foods as part of their regular diet, compared with those who ate less. Another study of women (conducted by Women's Healthy Eating and Living), who had completed treatment for early-stage breast cancer, found that those with the highest blood concentrations of carotenoids (from a diet generally high in these fruit and vegetables) had the least likelihood of cancer recurrence.

Sweet potato is a carbohydrate-rich food that releases its natural sugars slowly into the bloodstream (particularly helpful to anyone with type 2 diabetes), whereas a white bread sandwich or standard baked potato causes a rapid sugar spike in our blood (owing to their high glycaemic index, or GI). When boiled or steamed, sweet potatoes have a reasonably low GI of 46, compared to 82 if they are roasted and 94 if they're baked. White bread has a GI of 70; normal jacket potatoes of 69 with skin, or 98 with no skin, so steamed sweet potatoes are slow in their sugar release by comparison. Incidentally, carotenoids are a fat-soluble vitamin, so always eat them with a little fat, such as olive oil or coconut milk, or combine them with nuts to aid absorption. If you buy organic varieties, you can eat the flesh and skin; otherwise peel before eating, as the skin may have been treated with dye or wax. Then drop them into a bowl of water to prevent the flesh oxidising in the air.

Native to Central and South America, sweet potatoes aren't frost-hardy and need a long growing season with plenty of light, so they are probably a vegetable to buy rather than grow. It's now, in mid spring, when fresh, local, seasonal vegetables are hard to find, that they should rise to the top of the shopping list.



SWEET POTATOES WITH COCONUT, GINGER AND LIME

Preparation 15 minutes

Cooking 1 hour 20 minutes

*Serves 4 as a main or 6-8
as a side dish*

Enjoy this with a green salad or serve alongside sea bass or salmon and a salsa verde or ginger, chilli and coriander sauce. If eating as a main dish, top with pomegranate seeds for extra crunch and goodness.

**1.5kg (4-5) small-medium
sweet potatoes**

100g piece fresh ginger

**1 red chilli, deseeded and
finely chopped**

**3 garlic cloves, peeled
and crushed**

**400ml tin full-fat coconut milk
juice and zest 2 limes**

**2 heaped tbsp runny honey
or maple syrup (optional)**

**seeds of 1 pomegranate
(optional)**

- ① Heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan oven) gas mark 4.
- ② Peel and cut the sweet

potatoes into 1-2cm rounds and put in a large bowl.

- ③ Peel the ginger with a teaspoon. Finely chop it, with the chilli and garlic – I do this in a food processor. Add the coconut milk, lime juice and zest, honey or maple syrup (if using) and blitz briefly.
- ④ Pour over and mix well with the sweet potatoes – your hands are best for this. If making double or triple quantities, increase the coconut milk, lime, honey, garlic, ginger and chilli by only 50% to the proportions of the sweet potato, otherwise the dish turns into a soup. Season with flaky salt and freshly ground black pepper.
- ⑤ Transfer the mixture to a 21cm x 28cm casserole or baking dish. Cover with a lid or foil and bake for 1 hour until the potatoes are tender. Uncover and bake for an additional 15-20 minutes until the top is browned. Scatter with pomegranate seeds (if using). ➡



SWEET POTATO, CARROT AND PEANUT BUTTER SOUP

Preparation 30 minutes

Cooking 40 minutes Serves 6 as a main or 8-10 as a starter

Health credentials aside, this is one of my favourite fragrant soups. The ginger cuts through the richness of the nuts and sweet potato.

FOR THE PEANUT BUTTER (MAKES 500ML)

500g unsalted peanuts

FOR THE SOUP

2 tbsp olive oil

1 large onion (about 200g), roughly chopped

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 red finger chilli, seeds removed and finely chopped

2 lemongrass stalks, outer leaves removed and sliced

5 tbsp fresh ginger, grated

800g sweet potatoes, peeled and roughly chopped

3 large carrots (about 300g), peeled and roughly chopped

1 litre hot vegetable stock

1 x 400ml tin coconut milk

2 heaped tbsp peanut butter (see above)

dried, flaked seaweed or mineral salt and freshly ground black pepper

TO SERVE

handful of fresh coriander, roughly chopped

handful of roasted unsalted peanuts, roughly chopped

lime wedges

1 First make the peanut butter. Heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan oven) gas mark 4. Put the peanuts in a single layer on a baking tray and roast for 20 minutes until golden brown. Leave to cool.

2 Put the peanuts into a food processor and blitz for about 5 minutes for a crunchy version or longer for a smooth one.

3 Heat the olive oil over a medium heat in a heavy-based pan. Add the onion, garlic, chilli, lemongrass and ginger, and sauté until the onion is soft.

4 Add the sweet potato, carrots and stock, and bring to the boil. Turn down the heat and simmer gently for 10-15 minutes until the sweet

potato is soft. The carrots will be a little firmer.

5 Allow to cool slightly, pour into a food processor and blitz for 10 seconds, keeping some texture to the vegetables.

6 Pour the soup into a large pan, adding the coconut milk and peanut butter. Stir over a medium heat but don't boil. Season to taste.

7 Ladle the soup into bowls and serve with the fresh coriander, roasted peanuts and lime wedges in separate dishes.

SWEET POTATO TAGLIATA WITH WATERCRESS, GINGER AND SOY

Preparation 20 minutes

Cooking 25 minutes Serves 4 as a main or 8-10 as a starter

In this recipe, sweet potato slices are steamed and briefly griddled, which is better for your blood-sugar levels than roasting. They are then dressed in a little olive oil and served on a bed of punchy-tasting, colourful leaves.

1kg pink-flesh sweet potatoes

a little rapeseed or coconut oil, for frying
250g (4 large handfuls) of mixed peppery salad leaves, such as watercress, mizuna, rocket or any of the mustards and chicory

1 large handful of coriander (about 30g), leaves and stems coarsely chopped

2 heaped tbsp pumpkin seeds, dry toasted or roasted

lime quarters, to serve

FOR THE DRESSING

4 tbsp light soy sauce

5 tbsp olive or rapeseed oil

1 tbsp Thai fish sauce

juice and zest of 1 lime

1 level tbsp finely chopped fresh ginger

1 red finger chilli, deseeded and finely chopped

1 garlic clove, finely chopped

1 tbsp runny honey or maple syrup

30g fresh coriander leaves and stems, roughly chopped



1 Peel and cut the sweet potato into 1cm slices and steam for 5-7 minutes, or until just soft to the tip of a knife. Cool.

2 Whisk all the dressing ingredients together and put to one side for the flavours to infuse. Season with freshly ground black pepper to taste.

3 Heat a ridged griddle pan or heavy-based frying pan for 3-4 minutes (until you can't count to ten with your hand hovering just above it). Brush on rapeseed or coconut oil and griddle the sweet potato slices in batches for about 3 minutes per side. Keep each batch warm in a low-heat oven while you cook the rest.

4 In a large bowl, pour most of the dressing over the salad leaves and toss well to coat.

5 Serve on individual plates, adding a good handful of salad leaves to each one and topping with three or four griddled sweet potato slices. Finish with an extra drizzle of dressing, roughly chopped coriander and toasted pumpkin seeds. Serve with lime quarters. ➔



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FOR A SWEET POTATO, FETA, KALE
AND BROCCOLI BURGER RECIPE



ADZUKI BEAN AND ROOT VEGETABLE CHILLI

Preparation 25 minutes,
plus soaking **Cooking** 1 hour
40 minutes Serves 6

Make this fantastic meal in a pot in a big batch and eat over several days. Even devoted carnivores will like this chilli and, served with red or black rice, it has all the flavours of a

Moroccan lamb tagine. As well as the sweet potatoes and other root vegetables, the adzuki beans contain compounds that help to lower cholesterol and decrease blood pressure.

200g dried adzuki beans
2 tbsp olive oil
1 large onion, finely chopped
2 sticks of celery, finely chopped

1 red pepper, deseeded and finely chopped
1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
150g each of sweet potato, celeriac, carrots, swede and parsnips, peeled and cut into large chunks
2 bay leaves
½ tbsp cumin seeds, toasted and ground

½ tbsp dried oregano
½ tbsp paprika
1 tsp chilli powder
1½ tsp ground cinnamon
400g tin chopped tomatoes
200g passata
2 tbsp golden sultanas
500ml hot vegetable stock
30g fresh coriander leaves, roughly chopped

- 1 Put the adzuki beans into a large bowl, cover with cold water and leave overnight.
- 2 Heat the olive oil in a casserole dish over a medium hob, add the onions, celery, pepper, chilli and garlic, and cook for 10 minutes until softened.
- 3 Add all the root vegetables to the casserole, along with the bay leaves, cumin seeds, oregano, paprika, chilli powder and cinnamon. Stir well, then add the drained beans, the tomatoes, passata and sultanas. Season with flaky salt and freshly ground black pepper.
- 4 Cover and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring regularly to prevent sticking, or cover and cook in the oven at 160°C (140°C fan oven) gas mark 3 for 1 hour. Add the stock and return to the oven for 30 minutes. Check the seasoning and serve garnished with the fresh coriander. 🍴

i Join Sarah Raven at Perch Hill on 5 June to watch her demonstrating recipes from this series. A tour of the garden and growing techniques will be included. The £150 course runs from 10.30am-2.30pm. Readers can claim a 20% discount by calling 0845 092 0283 and quoting CLCOURSE. Offer ends on 30 April 2015.



Refresh your home furnishings to create an uplifting feel for spring

This is the time of year to revive your home and prepare for the warmer weather, add pastel cushions and introduce throws in lighter fabrics. Voile curtains will bring a spring-like feel when you open doors and windows to enjoy gentle breezes after the long winter. Create a welcoming atmosphere for guests by refreshing your existing furnishings – even fabrics that

can't be washed – particularly larger items such as upholstered furniture, which can lock in unpleasant odours. Febreze's multipurpose fabric refresher helps to eliminate nasty odours and achieve a light scent, plus it is ideal for use on rugs, sofas and curtains. Add a Febreze scented candle, with its patterned glass votive, to complete the look and lift a room with its delightful aroma.



Febreze multipurpose fabric refresher is available in a variety of scents to suit your taste, including Lotus Verbena and Vanilla Flower.

SIMPLE DISHES *for* BUSY DAYS

In her current series showcasing easy but mouthwatering recipes, Alison Walker creates a selection of classic fish dishes with a twist

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY ALISON WALKER ● PHOTOGRAPHS BY YUKI SUGIURA ● STYLING BY TABITHA HAWKINS



MONKFISH EN PAPILLOTE*Preparation 15 minutes Cooking 15 minutes Serves 4*

Monkfish suits robust flavours such as Pernod, which also goes particularly well with mushrooms.

25g butter, plus melted butter for brushing
 350g chestnut mushrooms
 4 spring onions, finely chopped
 1 garlic clove, crushed
 1 tbsp freshly chopped curly parsley
 1 large leek, sliced into 5mm rings
 4 x 175g thick monkfish fillets, membrane removed

4 tbsp Pernod or dry white wine

- 1 Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan oven) gas mark 7. Melt the butter in a pan and cook the mushrooms over a medium heat until golden. Set aside.
- 2 Mix together the spring onions, garlic and parsley.
- 3 Cut 4 x 30cm squares of foil

or baking parchment. Brush each one with melted butter. Put a few leek rings in the centre, followed by the mushrooms. Top with a fillet of monkfish and scatter with the parsley mixture on top. Drizzle with Pernod.

- 4 Bring the sides of the foil or parchment up to the centre and fold over to seal. Scrunch up the ends so the juices don't escape. Arrange the parcels on a baking sheet and cook in the

oven for 10-12 minutes until the fish flakes when pressed with the point of a knife.

- 5 Serve the fish drizzled with cooking juices. ➔



...fish suppers



HADDOCK CRUMBLE WITH CHERRY TOMATOES

Preparation 10 minutes Cooking 20 minutes Serves 6

For a change, swap the haddock for cod or salmon.

3 rashers smoked streaky
bacon, diced
100g fresh breadcrumbs
1 tbsp each parsley and
oregano
½ tbsp olive oil, plus extra
for brushing
6 x 175g pieces of haddock

(thick-cut loin), skin on
500g cherry tomatoes
on the vine

- 1 Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan oven) gas mark 6.
- 2 Mix together the bacon, breadcrumbs and herbs.

Season with freshly ground black pepper. Stir in the oil to bind together lightly.

- 3 Oil a large roasting tin. Arrange the fish pieces, skin side down, spaced apart in one layer. Brush each fillet with oil and season. Spread a layer of the breadcrumb mixture on top of each piece of fish, pressing

down lightly with a fork.

- 4 Tuck the cherry tomatoes (still on their vines) in between the fish. Drizzle with more olive oil and season. Roast for 15-20 minutes until the fish is cooked through – it should be opaque and firm. Serve the fish and tomatoes with seasonal vegetables or a salad.

MARINATED TUNA ON SESAME NOODLES

Preparation 15 minutes, plus marinating Cooking about 10 minutes Serves 4

Tuna dries out quickly when cooking, so it benefits from marinating first and very little time in the pan.

1 tbsp sunflower oil
2 red chillies, one finely chopped, one sliced
1 garlic clove, crushed
4 tbsp teriyaki sauce
1 tbsp rice vinegar
4 thick-cut tuna steaks
300g soba noodles

150g sugar snaps
1 tbsp sesame oil
6 spring onions
fresh coriander (optional)
lime wedges, to serve

① Mix together the sunflower oil, finely chopped chilli,

garlic, teriyaki sauce and vinegar in a non-metallic dish. Add the fish and leave to marinate in the fridge for 1 hour; turn after 30 minutes.

② Heat a griddle pan over a high heat. Remove the tuna from the marinade and season with salt. Cook the fish in the pan for 2 minutes on each side – the tuna will be rare. Set aside on warm plates to rest.

③ Meanwhile, cook the soba

noodles according to the packet instructions. Add the sugar snaps for the last minute. Drain.

④ Heat the sesame oil in a pan and gently fry the spring onions and sliced chilli for 1 minute. Toss the noodles and sugar snaps in the oil. Divide the noodles between four plates and top with tuna. Garnish with coriander and lime wedges. ➞





CRISPY SALMON WITH PEA PURÉE

Preparation 10 minutes *Cooking* about 10 minutes *Serves* 4

If using fresh peas, you may need to cook them for longer depending on their age and freshness.

4 x 150g salmon fillets,
skin on
1 tbsp sunflower oil, plus
extra for brushing
30g unsalted butter
400g fresh or frozen peas
1 tbsp freshly chopped mint,
stalks removed and reserved
60g watercress
3 tbsp crème fraîche
extra-virgin olive oil,

for drizzling
pea shoots, to garnish
(optional)

- ① Score the salmon skin lightly, four or five times diagonally, taking care not to cut into the flesh. Brush the skin with oil and season.
- ② Heat the butter and oil in a large pan over a medium to

high heat. Add the salmon, skin side down, in one layer. Cook for 6-7 minutes until the skin is crispy. Cover with a lid for 2-3 minutes to ensure the top of the fish is cooked through if necessary.

- ③ Meanwhile, bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Add the peas and mint stalks and cook for 3 minutes. Drain, reserving a cup of the water. Discard the mint stalks.
- ④ Return the peas to the pan

and, using a hand-held blender, blitz with the watercress and mint leaves to a coarse purée (you can also do this in a food processor). Add the crème fraîche and a little of the reserved pea water if necessary.

- ⑤ Divide the pea purée between four plates and top with the salmon, skin side up. Drizzle with olive oil, garnish with pea shoots and serve with seasonal vegetables. ➔



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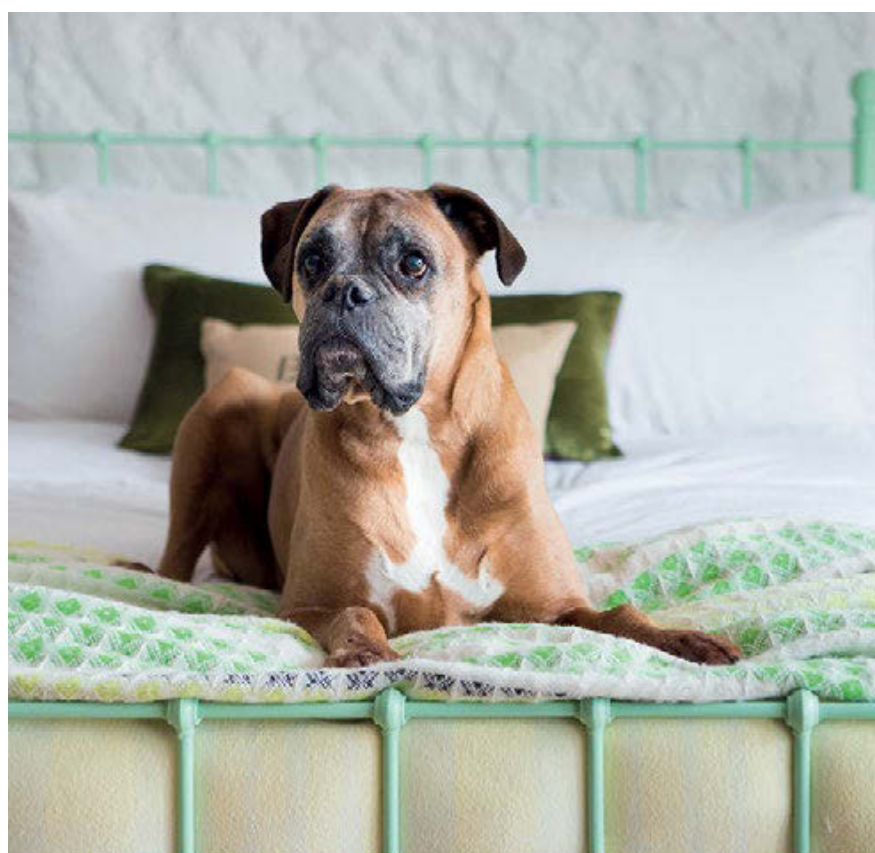


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GRILLED DOVER SOLE WITH BROWN BUTTER SHRIMPS

Preparation 10 minutes

Cooking about 10 minutes

Serves 2

Dover sole is a delicate yet meaty fish that benefits from simple cooking. Ask your fishmonger to prepare it for you.

2 Dover sole, gutted and skinned

**melted butter, for brushing
seasoned flour**

**¼ cucumber, peeled, halved
and core removed**

FOR THE SHRIMPS

50g unsalted butter

100g brown shrimps

**1 tbsp capers, drained
and rinsed**

juice ½ lemon

**1 tbsp freshly chopped
flat-leaved parsley**


1 Heat the grill to high.

Brush each side of the fish with melted butter, then dip in seasoned flour, shaking off the excess. Cut the cucumber into half-moon slices. Set aside.

2 Arrange the sole on an oiled grill pan and cook under the grill (about 10-15cm away from the heat) for about 4 minutes. Turn over and grill for another 3-4 minutes until the flesh is opaque and firm. Transfer to a warm plate while you make the sauce.

3 Melt 50g butter in a small pan. When it is foaming and golden-brown, remove from the heat and add the shrimps, capers, lemon juice and parsley.

4 In another pan, melt the remaining butter and add the cucumber slices. Cook for a couple of minutes until tender. Keep warm.

5 Spoon the buttery shrimps over the fish and serve at once with the cucumber. 

Fresh ideas

Embrace elements of the season with the pale woods, blue hues and countryside motifs of Laura Ashley's latest collection



Now is the perfect time of year to refresh your home, so celebrate nature's most exciting season with the appealing new Casual Country collection.

This beautiful range draws upon Britain's crafting heritage. Furniture shapes reflect elegant, classic designs but are created in pale bleached woods ready to paint for a modern look. This relaxed feel continues with a calming palette of complementary blue shades, including seaspray, royal blue and off white.

Nature-inspired motifs, such as delicate pussy willow or soaring swallows, feature on pretty cushions while the simple stripes of rustic china and country linens are echoed by lamp bases in the shape of storage jars and a range of stylish fabrics.



ABOVE Bramley blue chest of drawers, £950; Henfield lamp, £60; Hatherleigh cushion, £42; Luella throw, £60; white frames, from £18 **FAR RIGHT** Cambridge chair, £950; cushions, from £36; fabrics, from £32/m **CUT-OUTS** Tobermory striped lamp and shade, £75; large enamel caddy, £26; Elgin side table, £75; furniture paint (on legs), £22/1 litre



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LAURA ASHLEY

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STRETCH OUT

Perfecting your Downward Dog could be as beneficial to your heart as regular exercise. Researchers looking at a series of studies found that people who practised yoga had a lower risk of heart attacks or suffering a stroke than those who did no exercise, and a similar risk as those who did regular moderate exercise, such as brisk walking. The study, in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*, concluded this could be because yoga and exercise may have similar effects on the body – with both potentially performing a stress-relieving role and increasing circulation. Yoga's gentle movements provide an option even for those who find exercise tricky – so it's a simple way of safeguarding heart health.



TREAT YOURSELF

The new Cottage Garden Spa at Longueville Manor is small but has everything you need for an indulgent break – just like the island of Jersey, where it's based. Tucked behind the beautiful walled kitchen garden of this old manor house, there's a range of REN treatments to choose from. The What's Not to Love Bespoke Body Massage (£65, 60 minutes) offers your choice of plant-based oils to work out tension from the body. Just the one treatment room means waiting your turn but it's no hardship when this involves sitting in the courtyard hot tub while sipping a refreshing infusion made with herbs from the garden (relaischateaux.com/longueville).

health notes



BEST BUY

With lavender, mandarin and Jersey honey, the Soothe range from Scape Island Apothecary eases tension. And with every purchase of the Body Wash (£16), Body Butter (£22) and Body Mist (£16, seapeuk.com), a donation will be made to Target Ovarian Cancer.

Boost your wellbeing the natural way with our round-up from the world of health and beauty

ENJOY A DRINK AS INVIGORATING AND FRESH AS THE SEASON

with new Dorset Tea Wild About Mint (£2.25, dorsettea.co.uk). Inspired by the Dorset countryside, it is made with peppermint, wild herbs and nettles.

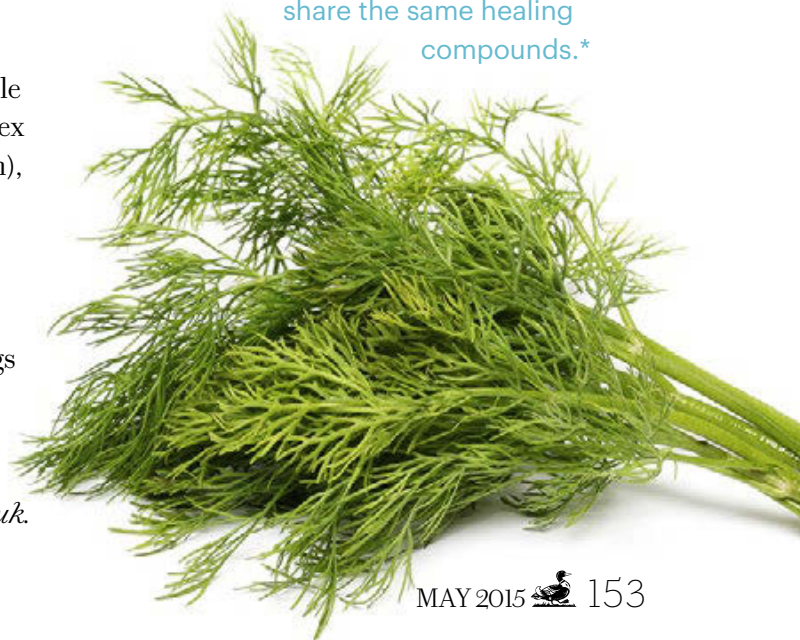
SPRING IS A BUSY TIME OF YEAR IN THE GARDEN, so help keep joints flexible and pain-free with Revive Active Joint Complex (£37.50 for a month's supply, reviveactive.com),

which contains marine collagen to help stimulate, repair and maintain cartilage. **LEARN HOW TO GROW YOUR OWN MEDICINE CABINET** with *Backyard Pharmacy* by Elizabeth Millard (Cool Springs Press, £15.99). Find instructions on how to cultivate and harvest medicinal herbs and plants, and advice on how to use them.

For more tips and products, go to netdoctor.co.uk.

NATURE'S MEDICINE CABINET

Dill It had fallen out of fashion but dill is making a comeback in restaurants, which is good news for both our palates and our digestive systems. This herb is a traditional aid for digestion, and is thought to have a muscle-relaxing effect that may help to ease stomach cramps. It has a powerful diuretic action, which, coupled with its natural antibacterial compounds, means it may also help to relieve bladder infections and cystitis. Use the aniseed-flavoured fresh leaves in salads or with fish, or add the dried seeds to soups and stews – both share the same healing compounds.*



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WORLD'S No. 1
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HONEY

When it comes to healing skin, honey is one of the few 'miracle' ingredients that's backed up by serious research – studies show it may help to treat conditions including acne, eczema and psoriasis, and even wounds. "Raw honey, in particular, is a rich source of antioxidants. It is said to have antibacterial properties and is a natural moisturiser and antiseptic," says Sharon Jarvis, founder of Beefayre. "You can apply it to damp skin and leave on for half an hour, before gently rinsing off with warm water to soothe and help unplug pores."

In its Apicosma range, Melvita uses three types of honey – thyme, acacia and orange blossom – to maximise the benefits. "These organic honeys work together to provide nourishment, to repair the skin's barrier function and to boost metabolism by ➔

Add a definite buzz to your beauty routine with skincare products that harness the healing benefits of honey, beeswax, royal jelly – and even bee stings

WORDS BY KATE LANGRISH

promoting the circulation of oxygen and nutrients," explains Didier Thevenin, international head of training and education at Melvita. Melvita Apicosma Soothing Cream (£32, melvita.co.uk) contains the three-honey complex, which is harvested from sustainable beehives and is perfect for nourishing and soothing dry or sensitive areas.

Its healing qualities make honey an effective ingredient in face masks for dehydrated or irritated complexions. Try The Organic Pharmacy Honey & Jasmine Mask (£37.95, theorganicpharmacy.com) or Fresh Crème Ancienne Ultimate Nourishing Honey Mask (£97, fresh.com), which is made with 38 per cent honey. And to get rid of stubborn dry or flaky patches on the body, use Mitchell and Peach English Leaf Body Cream (£36, mitchellandpeach.com), which includes Kent honey to create a light formula that melts into skin.

sourced from beekeepers in the wild-flower meadows of Romania, and the company donates three per cent of its profits towards bee conservation.

The qualities of beeswax mean it's also good for problem skin. If you have occasional blemishes coupled with ageing skin, then Voya Totally Balmy (£38, voya.ie) could be the answer. The antibacterial elements of the wax

mean it will fight spots without drying out more delicate areas.

And if you suffer from rough patches on elbows, knees and upper arms, beeswax will help reduce dryness and form a protective barrier to prevent cracking. Try Saaf Organic Super Hydrating Body Balm (£24.99, saafskincare.com) or Champneys Skin Comforting Miracle Balm (£5.50, champneys.com). ➔

Honey is a rich source of antioxidants and will nourish dry, sensitive skin

BEESWAX

Bees produce wax to build the comb that protects eggs, larvae, pollen and honey. Its water-resistant qualities mean it can help seal in moisture, but, unlike synthetic waxes, it comes with added benefits for the skin. "We use beeswax for its antibacterial, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. It acts as a softener and protectant, and is ideal for treating cold sores and cracked lips," Sharon Jervis says. Beefayre Bee Lippy Organic Lip Balm (£5, beefayre.com) contains beeswax ethically



No.1 for sensitive skin*



Proven Skin Kindness

*Based on Nielsen defined non-bio segment volume share for 52-week period ending August 21st 2014 (UK and Ireland)

ROYAL JELLY

'Superfood' for bees, royal jelly is the substance the insects produce to feed new larvae and the queen. "It contains B-Complex vitamins and boosts vitality. It's thought also to increase the moisture content of the skin, which in turn helps treat dry, damaged areas," Didier Thevenin explains.


Bee Yummy Skin Food (£39, abeautifulworld.co.uk) utilises the nourishing effects of royal jelly to 'feed' skin instead of bees and is great as a night cream. It also contains propolis, which is the sticky stuff created to keep the hive sterile, so it can be good for blemishes, too.

More mature skin types should try new Guerlain Abeille Royale Daily Repair Serum (£90, guerlain.com), which uses the restorative qualities of royal jelly alongside honey from the protected Brittany black bee to smooth and plump, while Burt's Bees Radiance Day Serum (£19.99, burtsbees.co.uk) harnesses the glow-giving qualities of royal jelly to bring out skin's natural radiance.

BEE VENOM

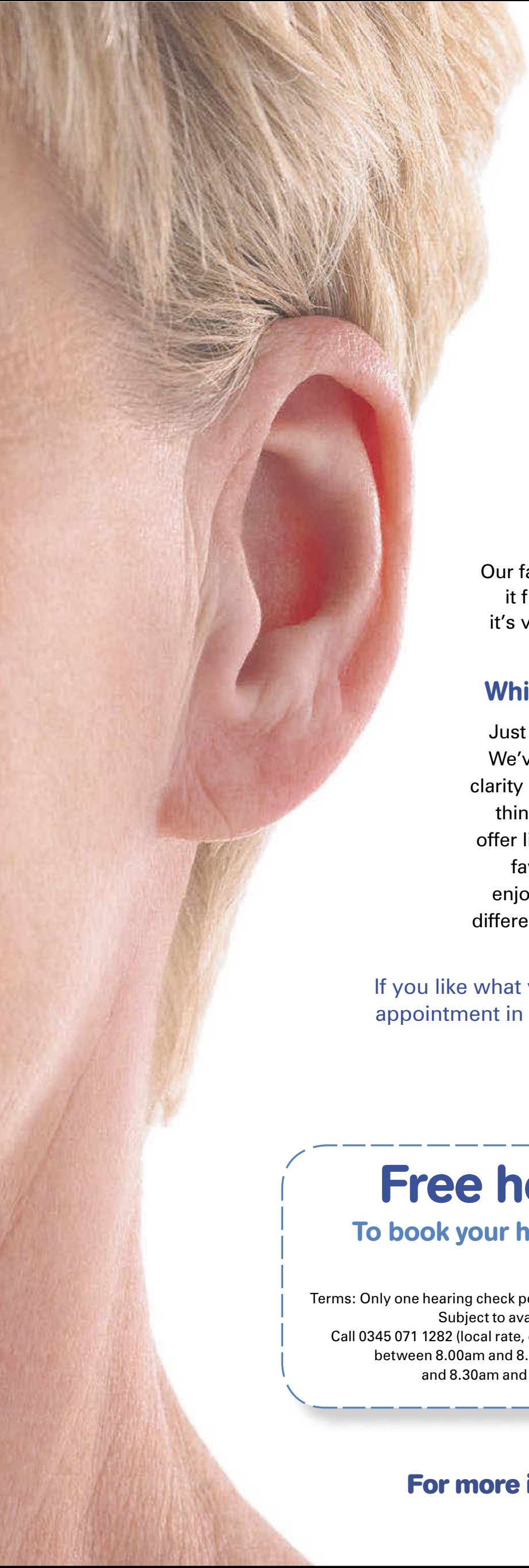
It's perhaps surprising but a bee's sting could be beneficial to your skin, too. Bee venom is gaining increasing popularity as an ingredient in a number of skincare products. Beauty therapist Deborah Mitchell, who was one of the first to use it in her

Heaven range, believes it has a Botox-like effect. "Many of my clients were asking for anti-ageing products and treatments and I would never recommend Botox, so I started to look at natural alternatives," she explains. "Bee venom works to control the facial muscles for immediate lifting, tightening and firming, while also tackling frown lines and wrinkles." Use Heaven Bee Venom Mask (£73, heavenskincare.com) as an intensive twice-weekly treatment – and don't worry about the bees, as the venom is harvested by stimulating them to sting a glass plate, and this doesn't harm them.

Introduce a daily 'sting' in your routine with Good Things Manuka Honey Daily Moisturiser (£7.99, goodthingsbeauty.com) or Manuka Doctor ApiNourish Revitalising Day Cream (£24.99, manukadoctor.co.uk), both of which also contain royal jelly. Of course, don't use these products if you're allergic to bee stings. 

Bee benefits

- Add a teaspoon of honey to your shampoo as you wash your hair for strength and shine
- A tablespoon of honey in your bath water will soothe dry or irritated skin and create a wonderful aroma
- Mix equal parts of honey and olive oil to make a balm for smoothing rough elbows or hands



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THE URBAN ARTISAN

Fanny Shorter, illustrator and screenprinter, London

Enter Fanny Shorter's studio at Cockpit Arts and you'll be dazzled by an explosion of colours – the botanical designs she screenprints for her ranges of furnishing fabrics, stationery and cushions are designed in an array of vivid shades. As a child growing up in Winchester College in Hampshire, where her father taught, she was surrounded by countryside, which, along with the William Morris patterns that adorned their rooms in the 14th-century buildings, fired her enthusiasm for nature. Fanny was also influenced by her mother, who had a keen interest in art history, made clothing and generally encouraged her children to be creative. Later, her passion for design led Fanny to visit the V&A and various National Trust properties frequently before training as an illustrator at the University of Brighton. After graduating, she worked for clients including Twinings, The Wellcome Trust and the Cutty Sark, and, when her mother died, used the money she was left to start her own business as a tribute to her.

Although based in the capital, she also has a workshop in Wiltshire, where she does her printing once a month. Orders for her homeware and accessories are increasing but she still makes everything herself. However, plans to team up with a London company to produce fabric by the metre for upholstery and curtains will give her more time for designing, so we can expect additions to her collections in the future.

To find out more, visit fannyshorter.com.



GET A TASTE OF THE COUNTRY Turl Street Kitchen, Oxford



"Our menu changes with the season and what our suppliers can provide"

When you visit the city of gleaming spires and are in need of sustenance, you'll be glad to come across Turl Street Kitchen near Exeter and Jesus Colleges. The café-bar-restaurant is housed in a Georgian building and features mosaic flooring, local art on the walls, scrubbed wooden tables and mismatched chairs, offering a relaxed feel for breakfast, lunch and dinner – or you can simply enjoy a coffee on one of the sofas.

Head chef Carl Isham's menu changes twice daily and features British classics, including smoked haddock fishcakes, and steak and ale pie, as well as options such as fennel and Oxford Blue gratin. The not-for-profit eatery (all funds go to the Oxford Hub, an organisation that coordinates charitable activity among students) is run according to ethical and sustainable principles: sourcing ingredients locally, zero waste, and community involvement. Organic, free-range eggs come from FAI (Food Animal Initiative) at the University Farm in Wytham; honey is produced by beekeepers Jo Nickless and her husband in Didcot; Cultivate Oxford supplies vegetables; and meat is sourced from Sandy Lane Farm in Tiddington, and the Adlestrop Game and Meat Company. *16-17 Turl Street (01865 264171; turlstreetkitchen.co.uk).*

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*JG Graves Woodland
Discovery Centre, Sheffield; 25
July, 9.30am-4pm, £85 (eccles
allwoodcraftcourses.co.uk).*



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VISIT A RUSTIC EMPORIUM Debbie Bryan, Nottingham



In the heart of the city's world-famous lace-making area, surrounded by the Victorian and Georgian buildings that once housed textile merchants, designer Debbie Bryan sells an exquisite collection of handcrafted accessories. In a delightful property full of nooks and crannies, she displays her scarves and brooches with works by other artists and makers from the area and further afield such as Juliette at Home, which produces scented soaps and candles, Salt & Co's tailored overcoats and Harris Tweed bags by Edinburgh-based Catherine Aitken.

Debbie's passion for the city's craft heritage is evident through the historic lace samples that are on show alongside tablecloths in the local Leavers lace designs and bobbins, plus ranges specially designed at the shop. And those who have trouble choosing what to buy can stay for afternoon tea or sign up for one of the crafting workshops. **18 St Mary's Gate, The Lace Market. Open Monday-Saturday, 10am-6pm (0115 950 7776; debbiebryan.co.uk).**

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SEEK OUT A GREEN SPACE South London Botanical Institute

Hidden behind a modest Victorian terraced house in Tulse Hill lies a paradise for anyone with a passion for plants. Founded in 1910 by keen botanist Allan Octavian Hume, the garden of the South London Botanical Institute is approached through a small conservatory that shelters tender specimens and a fascinating collection of carnivorous varieties. It may only measure 24 by 16 metres, but the plot (including a medicinal border and one containing a selection of flora recorded by John Gerard of Holborn in his famous 1596 *Herball*) is packed with more than 500 labelled species, many at their best in late spring and early summer. The glorious double flowers of Banksia roses, the lilac blooms of lady's smock and the vivid blue hues of the rare purple gromwell add to the romantic beauty this month as you wander along the network of weathered paved paths.

At the heart of the garden there is a pond filled with native wetland varieties and supporting frogs and newts, where sky-blue water forget-me-not blooms during warmer months.

You can also explore the herbarium with its beautiful displays of dried, pressed plants, including ferns, lichens and mosses, while the shelves of the library are lined with an extensive collection of botanical books and journals.

Open Thursdays 10am-4pm; Saturdays 10am-2pm (020 8674 5787; slbi.org.uk)



SAVOUR NATURE'S FLAVOURS Salads & herbs

Cultivate London (cultivatelondon.org)

From mizuna and wild rocket to 'Red Giant' mustard and oak-leaf lettuce, this innovative urban farm in west London sows and sells an amazing range of fresh leaves that are perfect for springtime suppers. The produce is grown organically by seven staff and 30 young trainees on three once-derelect sites and also includes a wide collection of edible herbs, including oregano, rosemary, thyme, marjoram, basil, parsley and coriander.

For a full list of stockists, visit the website.



BE A CITY NATURALIST The forager *Experienced gatherer Andy Overall* shares his top tips*

ST GEORGE'S MUSHROOM (*CALOCYBE GAMBOSA*)

This white-cream mushroom grows in broken rings on grassy patches, close to trees or under shrubs, alongside paths and in exposed areas. It has a mealy smell like Play-Doh. Find it until the beginning of June.

CHICKWEED (*STELLARIA MEDIA*)

This herb, also known as chickenwort or winterweed, flourishes on waste ground. It forms green mats and has white flowers, small leaves and fine hairs on one side of the stem. Use it as a leaf vegetable or eat raw.

WATERCRESS (*RORIPPA NASTURTIUM-AQUATICUM*)

This peppery, dark-green plant grows in lowland regions along streams. It contains manganese, iron, omega-3 fatty acids and vitamins A, B and K. Avoid areas where sheep and cattle are kept, as the plant can harbour parasites. Collect it until early summer.

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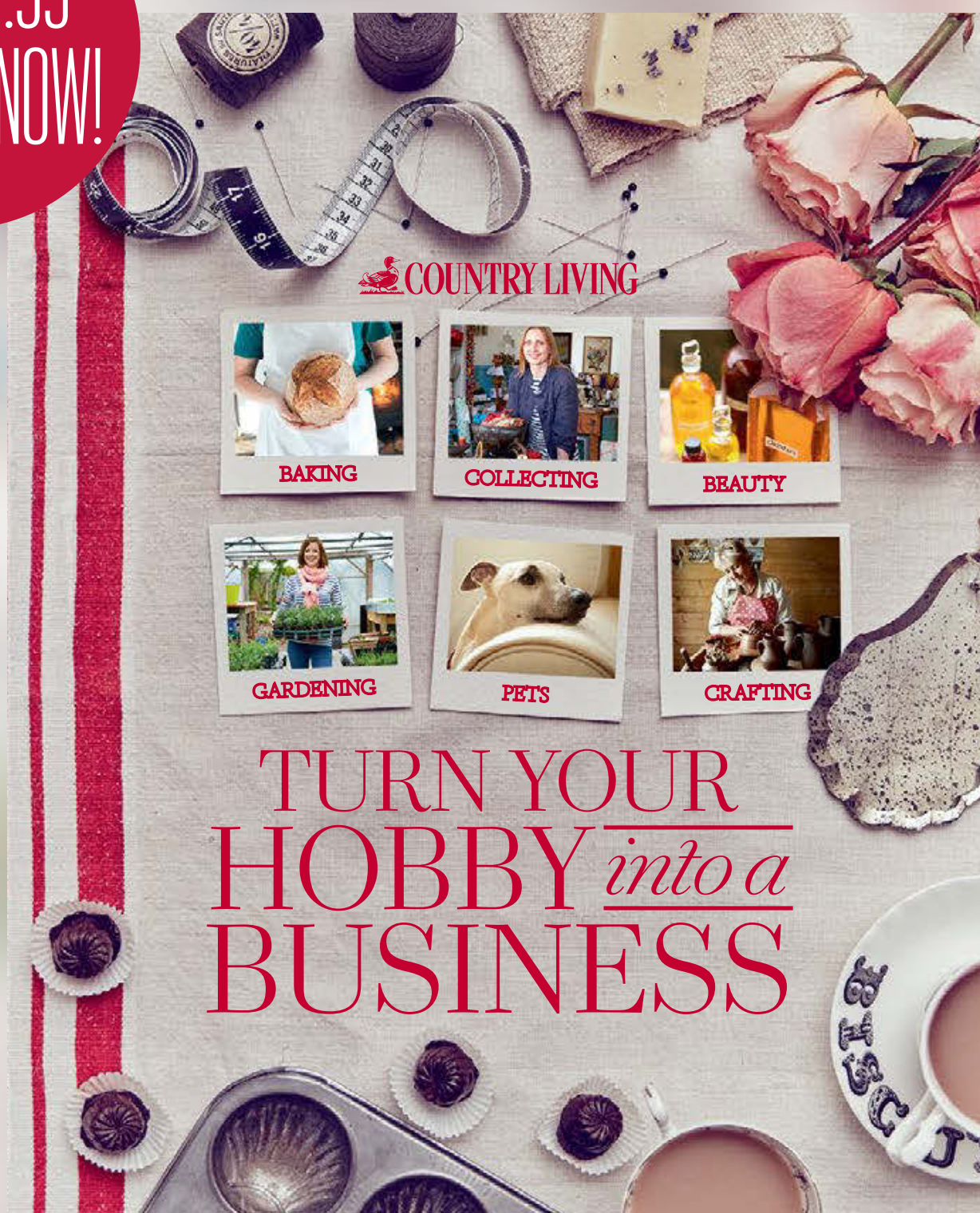
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REVITALISE YOUR VILLAGE

Modern rural life is greatly enriched by the people who make things happen in their area. Our practical series offers step-by-step guides to starting inspiring schemes that will benefit and unite your neighbourhood for years to come

WORDS BY RACHAEL OAKDEN

No. 8 Create an arts venue

Quality of life is about more than vital amenities. As Arts Council England observes in its *Create* journal: 'arts and culture are integral to our health, wealth and education'. But if you live in a village, an outing to the cinema usually means driving to your nearest market town; in remote parts it can require a lengthy expedition. A visit to a theatre or art gallery is probably an even rarer treat, reserved for trips to the city. That's no big deal if you're well-off and mobile. But people who are unable or not keen to drive along country roads at night are excluded from the cultural scene.

What are the benefits of putting on arts events?

Rural gatherings can be sparse: the annual fête in summer; the carol service in winter. If you live alone – as many rural residents do – you might feel uncomfortable walking into the pub by yourself or joining the Lycra-clad ladies at the yoga club. A film screening or performance of live theatre, dance or music creates an affordable and pressure-free opportunity to socialise – often, the interval presents a chance to discuss the film and catch up on news.

How do we screen films?

Contact your nearest touring cinema (see 'Where can we go for advice?') to enquire about joining its list of venues. Alternatively, if you'd like more control over what and when you show, you could set up your



THIS PAGE Hosting a mobile cinema in your village means that seeing a film no longer requires a lengthy trip to the local market town

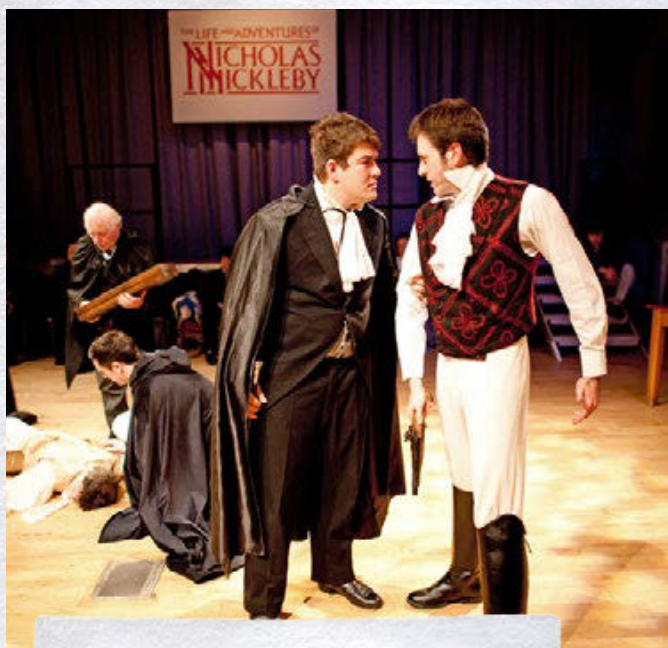
own – there are more than 600 local groups across Britain providing films on a not-for-profit basis. First decide on your venue: most community cinemas operate in village halls, although pubs and churches may also have suitable spaces. The other key thing is equipment: the basic kit of a high-definition digital projector, DVD player or laptop, a screen and a sound system – speakers and amplifier – costs between £5,000 and £10,000, although you can hire it.

What other costs are involved?

If you're showing a film in public (ie outside the home environment), even if it's been released on DVD for years, you need a single-title screening licence, which costs from £83, depending on the number of screenings and the size of the audience. The commercial type allows you to sell tickets and advertise; the non-commercial version means you can't charge for seats. Many community cinemas run membership schemes that offer an annual subscription in return for cheap or 'free' tickets. This creates a sense of ownership and helps bolster funds raised by selling refreshments, and tickets to non-members.

Where can we go for advice?

Download a starter pack from Cinema for All (cinemaforall.org.uk), formerly the British Federation of Film Societies, a charity that offers advice on venues, licensing, programming and technical issues. It also provides equipment hire



BE INSPIRED BY...

Llancarfan Community Cinema, Vale of Glamorgan

Llancarfan is just over ten miles from Cardiff's multiplexes and art-house cinemas, but that's a long way when there's limited public transport.

For many village residents, the simple pleasure of watching a film with other people was an expensive treat until the Community Cinema started in 2012. What began as an idea brainstormed in the pub has evolved into a cherished amenity that unites generations and socio-economic groups in a way that no other type of attraction can. "The appeal of film is universal," says Jim Barratt, chair of the management committee. "In a village you often have a disparate range of people from different backgrounds who wouldn't usually mix. The cinema provides an informal opportunity to go out and socialise."

Monthly screenings are run by volunteers in the village hall, enhanced by interval drinks and themed food – Indian snacks during *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*; James Bond-inspired cocktails for *Skyfall*. A slide-show of local photos and community news precedes each film, and special events have included a science-fiction weekend. "We work hard to match professional projection and sound standards so that people forget they're in a village hall," Jim says. "Our average audience size is 44. In a village of 200 residents, that's not bad." (llancarfancinema.co.uk)

THIS PAGE Local art exhibitions, live music, workshops and touring schemes, including film screenings and theatre productions, offer rural residents a valuable way to socialise


and administers the British Film Institute (BFI)'s Neighbourhood Cinema Equipment Fund, which can cover the cost of new kit for community cinemas that have been running for more than six months (bfi.org.uk/bfi-neighbourhood-cinema-equipment-fund). The BFI's website (bfi.org.uk/neighbourhoodcinema) has a database of community and touring cinemas.

What about live performances?

Rural touring schemes work with promoters to bring professional performers to community spaces. Funded by national Arts Councils and local authorities, they liaise with theatre companies, dance troupes, musicians, comedians, poets, writers and visual artists, and provide subsidies that make it viable to stage exhibitions, literary readings, plays, recitals and other live events. If you'd like touring artists to visit your venue – setting it up can take quite a few months – the

first port of call is your local scheme, which you can find via the National Rural Touring Forum (ruraltouring.org/members).

Who do we need on our team?

Whether you're showing a film or staging a jazz night, you must have enthusiastic people to get the word out and help sell tickets. A marketing expert who can create eye-catching posters and web pages is particularly valuable, as are tech-savvy types who know how to set up equipment and overcome problems – muffled sound is the number-one issue in resonant village halls. You'll need a keen band of volunteers to divide up programming, marketing, ticket sales, front-of-house and catering duties. Most important is someone with the ability to mobilise people: like all community initiatives, village arts schemes become inundated with helpers at first but find ongoing support harder to maintain as the novelty wears off. 

THREE MORE COMMUNITIES TO LEARN FROM

Carn to Cove (carnlocove.co.uk), a rural touring scheme in Cornwall, works with a team of voluntary promoters across the county to bring dance, music, theatre and comedy to small communities. Upcoming performers include ensembles from the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and a Scandinavian dance quintet.

Hurst Village Cinema (hurstfilms.com) is an award-winning scheme in Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex, showing classic, foreign-language, independent and arthouse films in a theatre owned by its amateur dramatic society.

Pewsey Gallery (pewseygallery.com) exhibits and sells work by local artists and runs affordable arts-and-crafts workshops in its community-owned, volunteer-run space in the village of Pewsey, Wiltshire.

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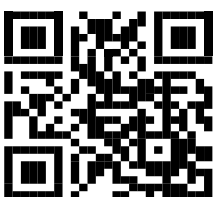
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A Victorian urinal has been given national protection, but there is no legal safeguard for our ancient trees. Naturalist Rob Penn, the Woodland Trust's Jill Butler and director of the National Trust in Wales Justin Albert discuss whether buildings receive greater recognition than landmarks of the natural world.

*For tickets, call 014.97822629
or visit hayfestival.org.*

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WHY SHOULD STATELY HOMES, cathedrals and, most recently, a 1970s skateboard park receive recognition and protection while beautiful, ancient arboreal specimens are subject to casual destruction? The V.I. Trees campaign is calling for politicians to give our historic natural environment the same status as our built heritage. As well as more than 7,000 people signing up to our call for national registers that will give the magnificent trees in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland the status they deserve, the Woodland Trust and *Country Living* made political headway recently by meeting with England's Forestry Minister. We spoke to Dan Rogerson MP to discuss the possibility of a register in England that would list all those

trees of special interest so they are treasured as living landmarks. Mr Rogerson was encouraging in his response and impressed with the 2,500-strong selection of comments with which he was presented, a clear illustration of the passion felt by many about the country's green monuments. "Trees are important in many ways, so I am grateful to the Woodland Trust and *Country Living* for sharing their ideas with me and keen to hear more about how a national register can work," he says.

Many thanks to all those who have pledged their support. Our mission is far from over, though – if you haven't yet added your name, it takes just two minutes (see top) to help ensure these natural wonders aren't lost. Together, we can safeguard them for ever.

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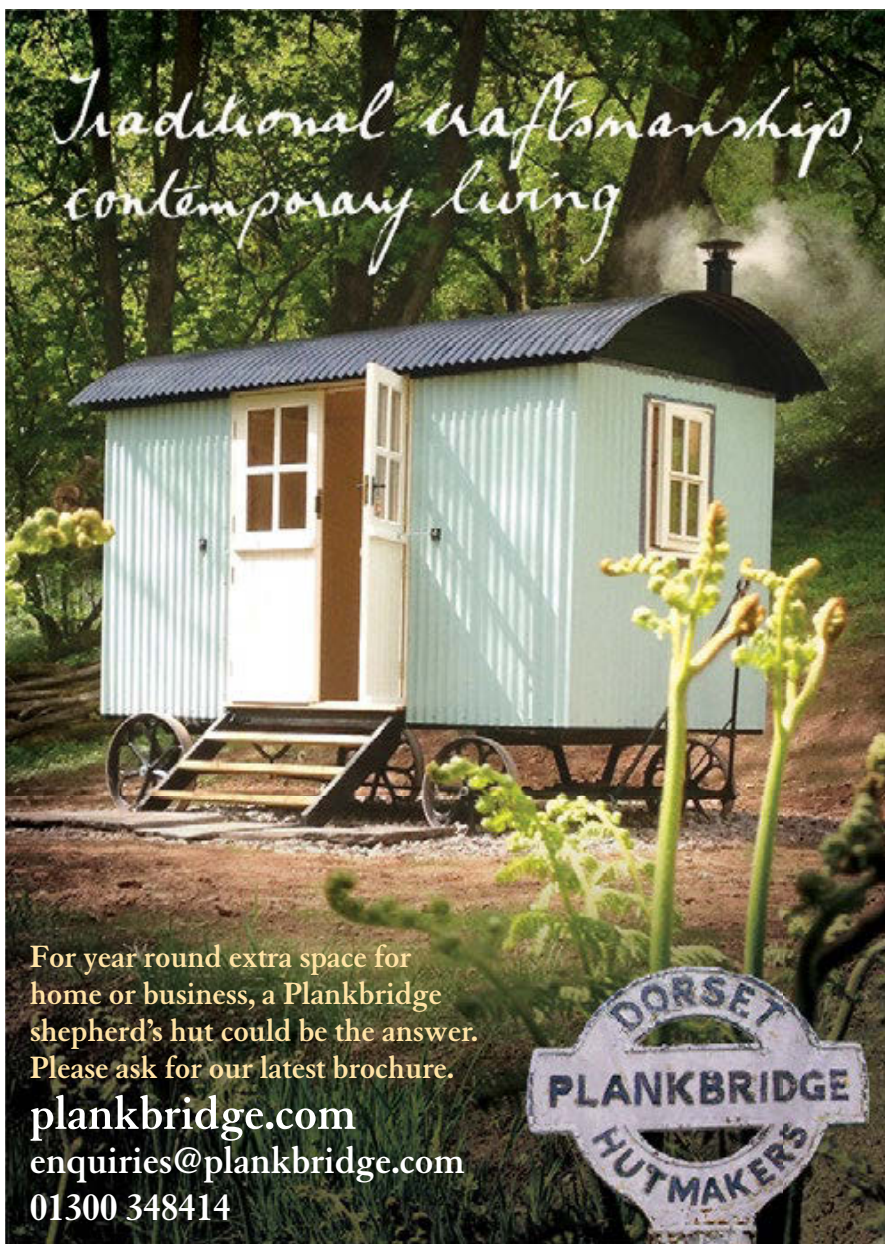
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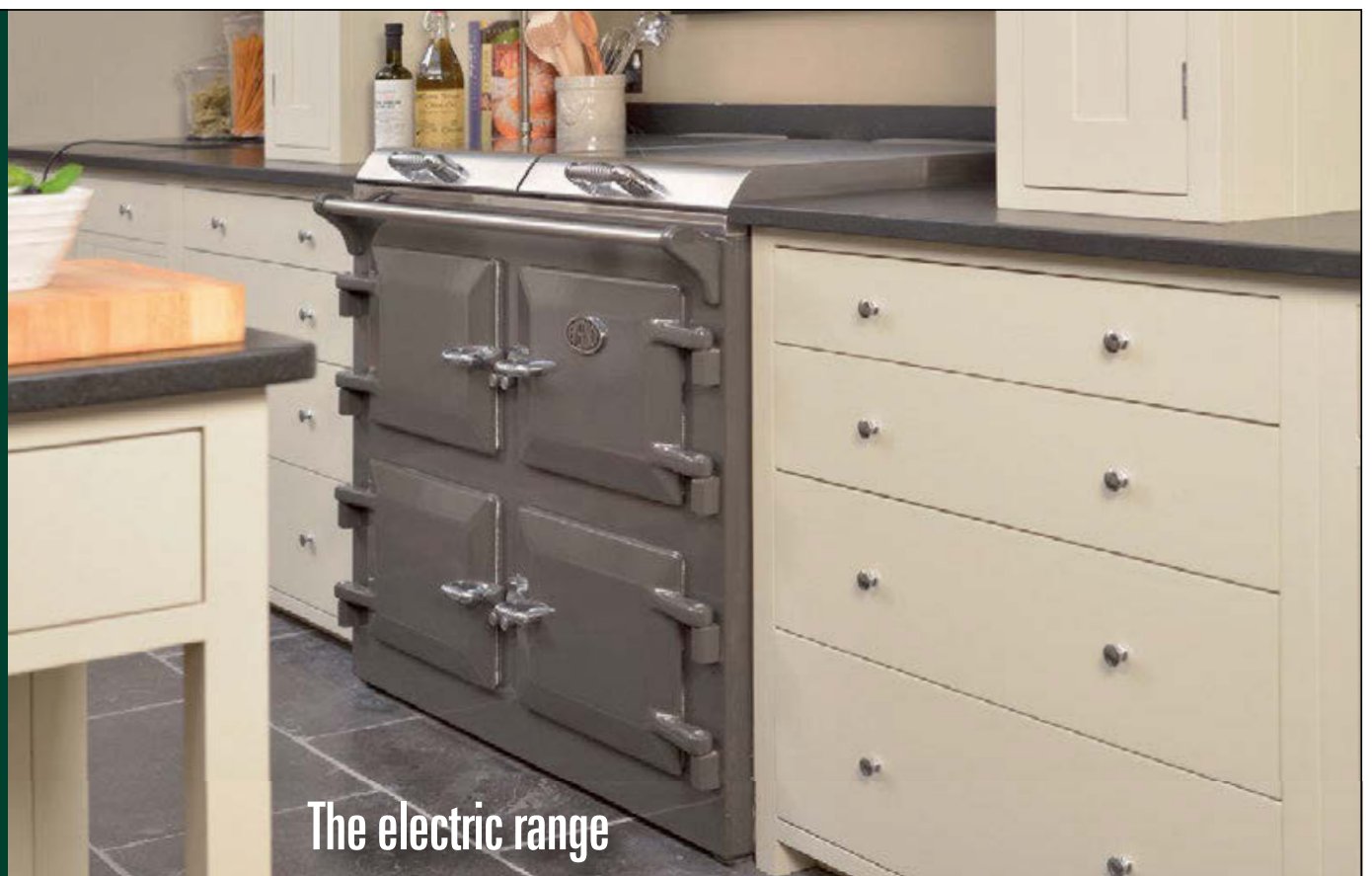


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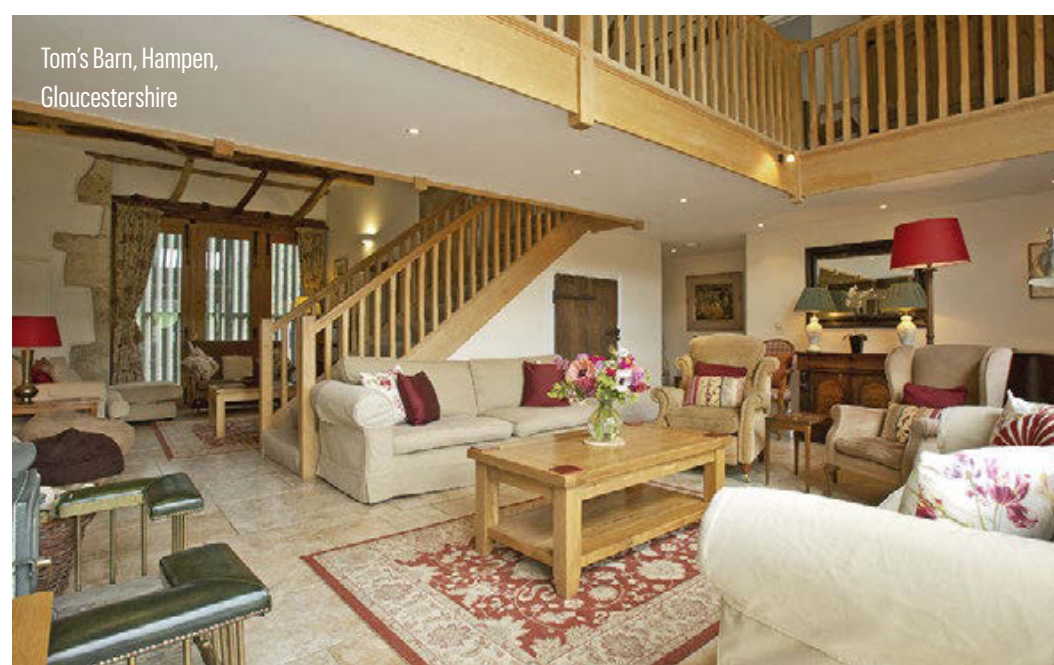


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| 194 BATHROOMS | 199 GATES & FENCING |
| 187 BEDS & BEDDING | 199 GENERAL INTEREST |
| 187 CONSERVATORIES | 201 HEALTH & BEAUTY |
| 199 COUNTRY BREAKS | 188 HOME INTEREST |
| 200 COURSES | 187 HOUSE & GARDEN |
| 200 FASHION | 187 HOUSE SIGNS |
| 193 FIRES, STOVES & HEATING | 199 HOUSESITTING |
| 198 FLOORS & FLOORING | 197 KITCHENS |
| 195 FURNITURE & FURNISHINGS | 200 PETS & LIVESTOCK |
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- Greenhouses and large, horned mammal.
- Verandas from paradise.
- Fruity clothing company.
- Tableware firm sounds like low-growing plant.

Send your answers on a postcard to: CPCNLP15058, Hearst Magazines UK, The Data Solutions Centre, Worktop S80 2RT.

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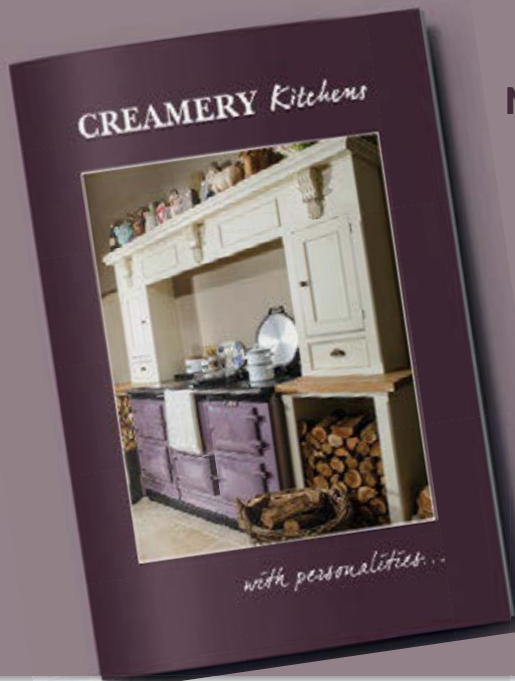
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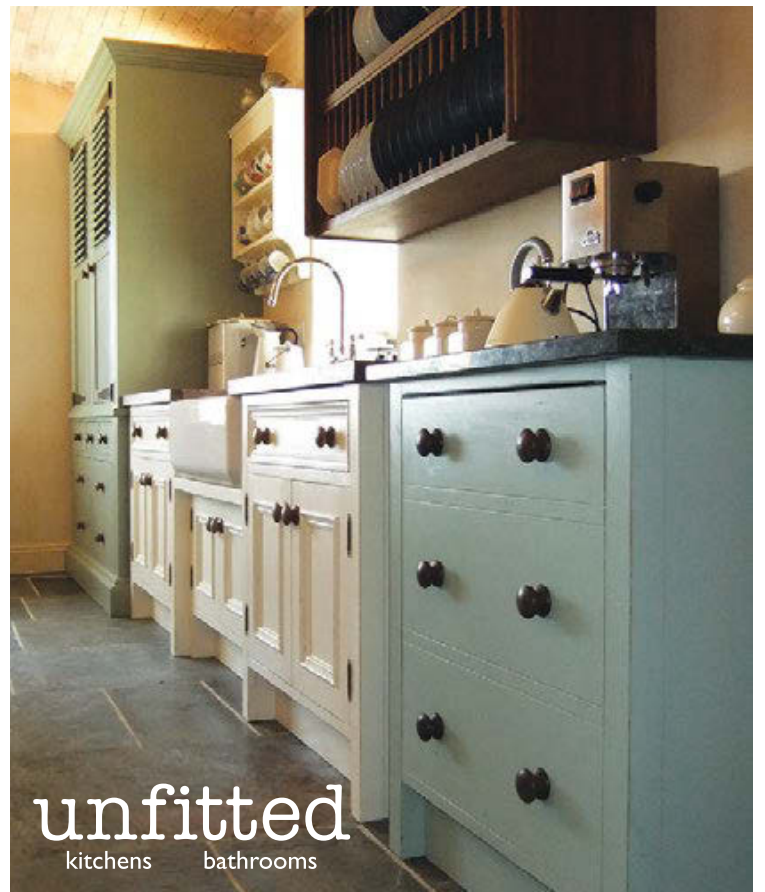
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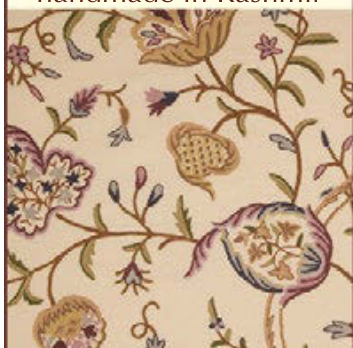
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Being overweight is no laughing matter when the physical strain on your body is starting to take its toll on your health. Your GP or your family may have expressed their concern and urged you to slim down – all very well if only you knew how to!

Help is at hand to resolve your weight problem. Rachel and her team have helped nearly 4000 clients of all ages and all walks of life to slim down successfully. Many come to see her as a last resort, delighted to have achieved and successfully maintained the weight they want to be.

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The Metabolic Weight Loss Programme is based on a simple four-stage eating plan: the first two stages deal with weight loss, while the last two stages deal with weight maintenance. This highly successful tried and tested programme is easy to stick to and more importantly, it works.

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“Everything about The Metabolic Weight Loss Programme makes sense, it is easy to follow and the support from Rachel is superb.”

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CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Angela in front of her restaurant Murano; Portland Bill lighthouse on the Jurassic Coast in Dorset; freshly caught crabs

MY COUNTRYSIDE ANGELA HARTNETT

The chef loves to swap London life for the fresh air and flavours of the West Country

I live in the city but I love getting the chance to escape the hustle and bustle.

I moved to London when I was 26 to train and, now I'm a busy chef running three restaurants here, it's where I need to be. But, when I do have time off, I love to visit the countryside or coast – it doesn't matter where. I've always liked the sense of space. As a child, I lived in Densole, near Folkestone in Kent, and weekends were always spent outside, playing in fields or having apple fights in a neighbour's orchard. My siblings and I (I've an older brother, Michael, and younger sister, Anne) had fantastic freedom.

Growing up, we always ate freshly made meals – for my parents' generation, that was the norm. My mother's side of the family are from Bardi in the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna, where most high streets had their own butcher, fishmonger and grocer, and less food was imported. I'm lucky to have lots of excellent independents near to where

I live in east London, which bring some authentic country flavours to the city.

Fortunately, as well as great food shops, London has a lot of wonderful

green spaces. Hampstead Heath and Victoria Park (where I often walk my Jack Russell Alfie), and the paths along the River Thames, are some of my favourites. After being in a kitchen all day, it's great to get outside in the fresh air.

I love the turning of the seasons and my cooking reflects that.

Each month in Britain is distinct – something that makes this country special. For me, spring is all about ingredients like morels and wild garlic, which I'll serve in a simple risotto, or with gnocchi or tortelli.

One of my best days out was walking the coast path from Studland to Swanage

There's so much to see in the UK but I think many people feel under pressure to go abroad. I'll often go on staycations with family and friends, though. I've spent a weekend in Matlock in Derbyshire, cycled from Orford to Aldeburgh in Suffolk, and been walking in the Cuillin Hills on the Isle of Skye. For the past few years, my mum and I have been getting to know Devon and Dorset, too. We rent a cottage and visit places we've heard about – Corfe Castle, Bridport and Lyme Regis, for example.

One of my most memorable days out was following the coast path from Studland to Swanage. It's about a three-mile route along the Jurassic Coast – a UNESCO World Heritage Site – that passes three chalk formations called Old Harry Rocks. On clear days you can see across the sea to the Needles of the Isle of Wight, and the wild-flower displays in spring are beautiful.

The South West is also a fantastic place for food. When you spend most of your time in a kitchen, it's nice to have someone else cook for you, so we'll visit Mitch Tonks' restaurant The Seahorse, in Dartmouth, which I love, for freshly caught crab

and fish stew. But often my mum and I buy local ingredients and prepare dinner together at the cottage – nothing fancy, just the rustic Italian dishes she enjoyed growing up. *Torta di patate* is one of my favourites. It's a potato tart, best eaten warm from the oven. I make it myself at home, too, adding streaky bacon, Parmesan and the first of the season's leeks, and following it with my partner's honey tart with roasted apricots. The flavours of my childhood. Delicious. 🍴

Angela Hartnett is a Michelin-starred chef-restaurateur (muranolondon.com).

INTERVIEW BY EMMA PRITCHARD. PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAMY; GETTY. PORTRAIT OF ANGELA HARTNETT COURTESY OF MURANO



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